



REGINALD HETHEREDGE



By the Author of
"RAVENSHOE" &c.



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REGINALD HETHEREGE.

BY

HENRY KINGSLEY,

AUTHOR OF "RAVENSBOE," "GEOFFREY HAMLYN," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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RESERVE

REGINALD HETHEREGE.

CHAPTER I.

MR. DIGBY DOES THE BEST HE CAN UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

REGINALD HETHEREGE made so many failures, and accomplished such remarkable successes in his life, that the story of it would be worth telling, even had he, the principal character in it, no more moral value or capacity of expression than the buoy at the Nore; to which most excellent arrangement of staves and iron hoops he has been frequently likened by our mutual friend Goodge, the

great traveller, who was naturally an excessively good-humoured man about town, but who ended by being made F.R.S. for verifying other people's discoveries.

Whether Reginald was anything more worthy of description than the buoy at the Nore our readers must judge for themselves, it is most absolutely certain that he at one time earned the love and respect of all who knew him. He floated, like the great buoy, passively through calm weather and foul weather, sometimes with the waves rippling pleasantly about him, sometimes with the great northern seas pouring over his head, until the last ship he waited to pilot came safe into port; and then he broke from his moorings, and was towed comfortably into port himself. So much for Goodge's simile.

In the long course of his life he had

many opportunities for making friends and enemies—for making, as we before remarked, successes and failures. He availed himself of these opportunities to the utmost extent of his genius—which we rank high—during all periods of his existence. In the way of failures and blunders, his genius never served him so well through his life as it did on the first instance when he utilized it. The most magnificent blunder which Reginald ever made was being born at all, or, to be more correct, being brought into the world exactly when he was. In all his future transactions, remarkable as they were, he never approached his first masterly fiasco.

He was humbly conscious of this through his life: up to quite a late period in his existence he would coolly and bravely face any member of the family on any other point, but always

grew sheepish when it was pointed out to him (as at one time it very often was) that he had inflicted awful wrong upon the family by being born on Sunday night. It was too frightfully true to be gainsaid, and he, the poor man of the family, suffered for it heavily. The majority of the family, or, rather, of the five families, were rich, and consequently moral: at all events, it was not worth their while to put him out of the way; still he went near expiating his crime, or worse, his blunder, on many occasions. The circumstances surrounding his birth were nearly the same as those in the *Juif errant* of Eugène Sue, and there was nothing to prevent his having been the hero of a similar romance, except that he lived in England, and that the estate was contended for, not by Jesuits, but by the legal advisers of some rich families.

The origin of the five families to whom Reginald was about to become the victim is lost in the mists of obscurity. Their names were Digby (the great merchant), Simpson, Talbot, Murdoch, and Hetheredge. They had originally, all of them, it was said, come from the North, but they never cared very much for going into their ancestry, with the exception of the Talbots, who had some very dim and remote connection with Alton towers, and also with the recently ennobled family of Snizort: which, at the time when our story begins, was represented by MacSnuffles of Sneeze: the Barony of Cackle having been in abeyance since 1748.

At the time of Reginald's birth the head of all the families was acknowledged to be old Digby, the last of his name, as he declared (though by looking about him he might have found a few poor

relations). He, however, for reasons of his own, hated all his relations, both poor and rich, and even the richer relations seldom darkened his doors at No. 1, Bolton Row, and when they did, met with but a sorry reception. Other company was very welcome there, but it was not of the sort, brilliant in one way as it might be, which would in any way suit a British merchant's wife. Whereby our readers doubtless gather that old Digby was unmarried.

In the year 1780 few men were better known in the mercantile world than Mr. Digby, M.P., the merchant. Originally, people said at the time, of highly respectable extraction, everything which he had touched had turned to gold, and he was one of the richest men in England, though he had the reputation of being one of the most disreputable. He had never been married, and so had no heir,

the destination of his money being utterly unknown to all his relations, who were not very numerous, and, with one exception, rich. Even the exceptional one, however, was a clerk in the House of Commons with a very good income, which of course died with him ; and so, when a man's poorest relation has an income of £800 a-year, he may be said not to be plagued with those troublesome pests, poor relations, at all—for kinship, with some people, does not imply relationship. Such was the account which the world gave of the great Digby in his old age.

Mr. Digby was very much sought after by his recognized relations, in spite of his invariably bullying them when they came to see him, and in spite also of a great scandal, almost of European dimensions, which ended in the House of Lords, a duel, and the total exclusion of the great capitalist from court, or even from office,

for a long time. The loudly-expressed anger of the King and Queen soured him, and he retired from the world of society, though not from that of politics. Middle-aged when the scandal happened, he was in the prime of his debating powers, and his voice on certain subjects which he had made the study of his life, was law in the House of Commons.

The lady to whom the scandal attached died without his having made her the reparation in his power. That his conduct with regard to her in this respect was considered highly dishonourable, in a not very particular age, he was soon made aware by the most free living of his acquaintances. What his reasons were no one knew, but he used to say that no one ever forgave his behaviour but his own relations.

Towards these relations the old man, disappointed and miserable with all his

vast wealth, conceived a detestation bordering, they thought, upon lunacy. One of them only was often admitted to see him—William Hetherege, the clerk in the House of Commons. He, as he roughly expressed it, got more kicks than half-pence.

Scandals die out to a certain extent after a time, more easily, perhaps, in the case of great capitalists and great orators than in the case of common people ; as for the great scandal of all in this case, people began to say that the unhappy cause had mainly brought it on herself, and that old Digby had his reasons for what he did. A man may be a considerable villain in certain societies if he has a million and a half of money ; and although certain people had helped to treat Digby as a social Timon, yet they remembered that Timon had not lost his money by any means, and re-

membered the times when “Timon’s gold trod heavy on their lips”—for the merchant used to entertain well, and was generous with his money. After ten years, Digby might have been pretty much where he liked—in men’s society, at all events; he liked, however, to be at his office, his home, and the House of Commons.

His family, though they paid him all the court they were allowed to, spread the most remarkable rumours about him, which no one believed, and which, getting round to his ears again, did them no good at all. The most popular of these rumours among the family was that he had sold himself to the devil. This must have come to the old man’s ears, and we shall see what very grim mischief he made among them in return for their kind suggestion. It was the most expensive piece of nonsense ever set afloat

by any human family, and, but for the tender care of the lawyers, might have paid off a large part of the national debt.

At last the old man failed rather suddenly; he had a quiet warning which he and his doctor kept to themselves, but he knew his end was near. The doctor asked him if he had made his will, "for now," he said, "that you are recovered it is the time to do so." The old man grinned sardonically as he told the doctor that he had made it the day before. He then began laughing in a strange way, and gave the doctor to understand that "they," as he always spoke of his relations, would find themselves considerably puzzled.

He sent for his four principal relations (he had none—recognized—of his own name, as we said before), Talbot, Simpson, Murdoch, and Hetherege, and when they came he received them with friendly

cordiality. He told them that his end was near, and Talbot, Murdoch, and Simpson all concurred in saying that they hoped he had many happy years to live. Hetheredge, on the other hand, said not one single word, and looked so exactly as if it was no business of his, and a matter of profound indifference to him, that the sardonic old sinner was delighted, and stepping across the room, he took from a glass cabinet a snuff-box set in diamonds of immense value, and gave it to Hetheredge, who thanked him, and put it in his pocket with an unmoved countenance.

He then informed his relations that his will was already made, and that the various branches of the family were handsomely provided for, to the latest generation, which they were extremely glad to hear. While he was speaking the door opened, and a most beautiful

boy, about eight years old, dashed into the room, and climbed on the old man's knee, throwing his arms round his neck and kissing him. None of the four had ever seen such a beautiful boy, so splendidly dressed. Three of them could not conceal their extreme vexation at the boy's appearance, for they saw that the rumour was true which they had heard, but had constantly denied: that there was a son in the family on whose innocent head was visited the merchant's anger against the mother. This boy, they thought, would run away with a large sum of money.

William Hetheredge alone spoke—

“Cousin Digby, you owe some reparation here. Of your past affairs I know very little, of the motives for your strange conduct nothing. But I hope that you have done your duty by this child?”

“Yes, I have,” said old Digby. “He returns to his natural position in life; he must make his own way in the world.”

“It is a question between yourself and your God, Digby,” said Hetheredge. “Poor little innocent! My child, if you ever want a friend—and, God knows, I am afraid you will—remember William Hetheredge.”

The boy laughed and said, “Yes, he would remember, and so would his sister Isabel;” and the four said good-bye, and departed, seeing their kinsman for the last time.

The merchant sent the boy away, and sat a long while musing, as if undecided in purpose. At last he said, “No, I will not give it up. Good heavens! what a rage they will be in!” Here he laughed a laugh rather horrible to hear than otherwise. The grim, heartless old sinner, with the power of his wealth only a

matter of a few days, was laughing as he thought of the fiendish mischief which he could make with it after his death.

He ordered his carriage, and, greatly to his valet and housekeeper's dismay, told the coachman to drive to the House of Commons. "There will be a row about the first clause in my will," he said to himself, "and Murdoch and Simpson are quite noodles enough to try and set it aside on the grounds of insanity. I must show in the House, and talk the hardest common sense. Let us see, the Canal Bill is on. That will be just the thing."

Great astonishment was expressed at seeing him come in to take his place; several members offered their arms, and many more their congratulations. He had scarcely sat down when he was on his legs again, and made the speech known as the "Tea-kettle Speech," in what

took place subsequently. For a short time some people thought that the end of his speech was a little flighty; but, after a very few years, everybody recognized it to be, what many knew it to be at the time, a speech of consummate power and ability.

After alluding to his illness, and asking for their patience if he spoke slowly, he begged the House to pause before inflicting a heavy tax on posterity by granting excessive concessions to canals, as was at that time proposed. After giving a vast number of invaluable facts from his own experience, he went on to say that canals were merely the precursors of far more rapid and extensive modes of transport, and that he believed that before very long we should be doing the greater part of our national work by means of boiling water. He never was more calm or logical in his life than when he pointed

out the fact of the great power exerted by boiling water on the lid of a tea-kettle. Knowing him to be a man who had made great sums by buying inventions before they were known to the world, the House listened and wondered ; he passed to other things, and then sat down, leaving even those who were in doubts about the tea-kettle, forced to say that scarcely any man in the House could have made a more valuably lucid speech, with that exception.

Three days afterwards the shutters were up at his house : Mr. Digby was dead.

CHAPTER II.

THE WILL.

THE will came on the assembled family like a thunderclap. The first impression of every one was that the old man was mad; the opening clause was so astonishing and strange, that, as the old man himself had foreseen, it ultimately caused a few of his more foolish relations to try and set it aside on the score of insanity. The first clause, combined with his speech in the House of Commons, made up a piece of mischief particularly intended to plague the two most litigious of his relations, and which was perfectly successful. Here are the contents of the will, abridged. It somewhat differs from

Thellusson's, but made nearly as much trouble.

“I, Thomas Digby, having been a great sinner, having accumulated vast wealth, and having got no good from it, but great evil, do by this, my last will and testament, give and bequeath the whole of my property to my friend the devil, for his sole use and benefit during his lifetime, hoping that he will repent and make a better use of it than I have done.

“In case, however, of his dying before me, or his not appearing in person to claim the property, I make the following dispositions.”

After the above beginning they were pretty well prepared for anything, but scarcely for what followed.

He appointed Geoffry Talbot and William Hetherege his executors, leaving them £10,000 a-piece.

“In order to secure my faithful servants, Robert and Anne Dicker, from any possibility of legal troubles, I have already provided for them by deed of gift during my lifetime. In the same manner I have done all which I intend to do for my illegitimate son, who at present bears my name, and for his half-sister. Robert and Anne Dicker are appointed his guardians, and the boy will bear the name which I have given to them in my instructions. If the boy does well, he has my blessing; if he does badly, I love him far too well to give him my curse.”

The whole of his estate was then to be realized and placed in the English funds. No one of his four principal relations, Hetheredge, Talbot, Simpson, or Murdoch, or any of their male descendants living at the time of his death, were to take any further benefit from his property. After the death of his last living relation in

either of the four families named, that was to say, after the death of Alfred Hetherege, son of William Hetherege (who being now twenty-four, might last till sixty-four), possibly in the year 1820, a settlement was to take place. The eldest male descendant of the Hethereges, not alive at his death, was to take one half of the property then existing; the other half was to be divided equally among the living male descendants of the Simpson, Talbot, and Murdoch, who were alive at his death.*

Such was the will. It entirely prevented any one save the executors from touching a penny, and left them exactly as they had been before.

* The Thellusson will was far more absurd than this one. The result would have been 170,000,000 of money.

CHAPTER III.

REGINALD COMMITS THE CROWNING VILLAINY OF HIS LIFE.

Not very long afterwards, Lord North was speaking to Lord Thurlow, of course about indifferent matters, for they were no longer colleagues. “Have you seen this lunatic merchant’s will?” he asked. “Who would have thought that Digby would have gone mad at last?”

“It is,” said the great lawyer, “one of the cleverest wills I ever saw. The man has done as he always did, exactly what he wanted to do. He wanted to annoy his relations, and he has done it; I could not have succeeded in doing it better for him myself. Nothing could have pre-

vented his locking up his property for a certain number of lives, or leaving it to Bedlam. He has done more—he has left exactly such a will as will tempt his relations into law."

"Why did he hate them so?" said the other.

"It runs in some families," said Lord Thurlow. "What would become of us lawyers if it did not?"

"Will the law set the will aside?" said the other.

"Kill the goose that lays the golden eggs? I should fancy not easily," said the lawyer. "There will be money enough come into the lawyers' pockets to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem, if the Templars will join us Lincoln's Inn men. Good-bye."

The Hetheredges, like most poor people, had the habit of marrying early. William Hetheredge had married early, and his

son Alfred, the youngest male relative of Digby, the last on the black list, had been married nearly the prescribed time which is laid down as that when an addition to the family may be looked for with tolerable certainty. The Hetheredges, father and son, were of no great importance to the family, not being rich, and the consequence was that the state of health of Mrs. Alfred was a matter of profound indifference to them. The nurse, however, was in waiting at the very time when Mr. Digby made his extraordinary speech in the House of Commons on the subject of tea-kettles.

Alfred was a junior clerk in the House, under his father, and of course heard his speech. He was at first under the impression that his cousin, the great Digby, had been drinking; but his speech was so fine, and yet so very absurd, that he determined to make his wife laugh about

it. She wanted a good laugh, for she had been low in her mind ever since the nurse had come into the house.

In fact, Nurse Smart was not at all a reassuring person. She was aristocratic and expensive, or the Hethereges, as poor people, would not have had her at any price. She was very religious, warranted very temperate, very lady-like, and was supposed to be the daughter of an archdeacon or magistrate, no one ever knew which; but she was not reassuring. And the only fault to be found with her, said the doctors, was that she was used by over-precaution to make young mothers too nervous. One of the great doctors of the day said that she was the most ignorant old humbug in London; but he was always violent.

She had talked persistently about nothing but the coming event to Mrs. Alfred, until that young lady was as

close on a nervous fever as need be. She had got hold of a Prayer-Book and had read the first sentence of the Churching Service, which was less assuring than the conversation of Nurse Smart. She was very glad to forget the “pain and peril” mentioned there by seeing Alfred come smiling in from the House of Commons.

“ My darling,” he said, “ I have such a joke for you ! Cousin Digby came down to the House and made one of the most masterly speeches ever heard, after which he said that he intended to be dragged to Manchester by a tea-kettle. He is as mad as a hatter.”

This was too much for Mrs. Alfred. She shut up her Prayer-Book, rose to her feet, stretched out her hand, and said in a loud, shrill voice,—

“ My child, my child ! My unfortunate, neglected, unborn child ! My last

hope is gone—the hope that would have sustained me through everything is taken from me. I thought that Cousin Digby would have taken to it, and provided for it ; now I hear that he is a raving maniac. Let me die.”

She fell into his arms as Nurse Smart came rushing in. “ Why, what is the matter with the poor lady, sir ? You ought to be ashamed of yourself.”

“ Say it was me,” said Alfred, with ungrammatical recklessness. “ Yes, say it was me. Oh yes. Ha, ha ! *I* did it ; quite so.”

Here Mrs. Alfred, who had sank back on the sofa, grew extremely faint, and murmured, “ Let me die.”

She was really very ill indeed, and the nurse told Alfred, with a scared face, that she had received a severe nervous shock. It was undoubtedly true. She was a little, fragile being, who had been a long

time ailing. Any sudden intelligence would have been most dangerous for her. The intelligence which Alfred brought appeared to her, in her over-wrought state, to be overwhelming, and she sunk under it. She, in fact, never ultimately recovered the effects of that unlucky joke.

Nurse Smart begged Alfred in heaven's name to fetch the doctor. Alfred fled and roused Savile Row, sending every doctor he found at home away to his house at once, and leaving word for every one to follow post-haste. There were so many carriages at his door that night that the link-men thought he was giving a party, and assembled in some force until undeceived, when they sulkily departed.

Actually before he got home the child was born. The first doctor was only just in time to usher the child into the world, and be able, with the nurse and two other

hastily arrived doctors, to swear as to the date of its birth. The minute was of very little matter, the hour was very little matter: *the wretched little swindler was born nearly two days before the death of Digby.* And until that child was dead and buried not a human being could touch a penny of Digby's money, with the exceptions previously mentioned.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAMILY FORGET CERTAIN FACTS ABOUT DIGBY, BUT REMEMBER HIS MONEY.

THERE was fearful consternation among the assembled relatives when the will was read. Even Geoffry Talbot and William Hetheredge were disappointed. Practically no one was to feel the direct benefit of the old man's money until after they were as dead as he was: a rather ghostly idea. When they first realized the facts, the first effects on some of them were muttered curses. If the old man had risen from his grave then and seen them he would have been amply revenged, and might have altered his will.

But the most able and benevolent of our theologians doubt whether departed spirits are allowed to see the fruition of their actions in the next world, or the spirit of the departed Digby might have laughed a laugh so grim and happy as to be entirely out of place either in the nether or higher regions.

The youngest living man, as we have said before, was Alfred, then twenty-four, and of weak health. Before his death nothing could be done — unless they could set aside the will.

That was improbable, but possible. Each man saw that at once; but, then, each man profoundly distrusted his neighbour, and no man was lawyer enough to say what the effect of success would be. It was evident that unless something could be done by united action they could only calculate on their descendants inheriting the money. That was something, for,

with the exception of Hetherege, they were all rich, and the possible succession of their heirs male would reflect its splendour on them. They had enough, and might live the more easily and freely as their descendants were provided for. Still the will was a terrible disappointment.

Geoffry Talbot seemed to be out of the reckoning altogether, for he was a childless widower, getting old.

William Hetherege had a son Alfred, who was married and expecting a child. As matters stood, this young man's child, if a son, would be the first to participate in the will. But none of them knew exactly when the child would be born.

Richard Murdoch had one son, consumptive and dissipated, who might marry.

Robert Simpson had a daughter who had married her cousin, was thirty-two

years of age, and had not as yet had any children.

Geoffry Talbot was the first man who spoke. "You see, cousins, that we have made a mess of it. We flattered and harassed the old man so continually that he lost confidence in all of us except Hetherege. As it stands it seems to me that Hetherege has every chance of seeing his grandson in possession of half the money—when he and his son are in heaven. I take my £10,000, and retire from the contest. Cousin Dick Murdoch, your son may marry. Let him be quick about it, or he will die of drink ; his son will share. Cousin Bob Simpson, your daughter will have no children, and you are only forty-nine. Marry again. To recur to you, Dick Murdoch, I should say the same thing. You are a widower, and if Tom sticks to the brandy bottle you are as likely to have a son as he

is—for, perhaps, no woman would marry him. It is obvious, cousins, that the money must come to our children or our children's children. Why worry ourselves about the matter?"

Mr. Robert Simpson said, "Cousin Talbot, you are laying down the law without any evidence. My daughter may have children yet."

"She may not have a boy, Cousin Simpson," said Geoffry Talbot, who had the family failing of delighting in annoying his relations, though he was one of the most agreeable and placid tempered men in Europe. "Besides, in the case of a vast inheritance like this it would cost £20,000 to prove whether the old man, from his wording of the will, meant the money to go through the female branch at all. No; I should marry again. Alfred's expected child may be a girl, in which case I might think it worth my while to marry again, even at my age."

William Hetherege spoke. "You are not aware, then, that Alfred's wife was confined two days before the old man's death. The boy is a very fine boy, and is likely to do well. I did not mention the matter, because I did not know, any more than you, the contents of this will, and I did not think that my affectionate relations particularly cared to know of the circumstance."

"This is a swindle," said Simpson.

"There will be no settlement till about 1860, if the boy lives," said Murdoch.

Talbot burst out laughing. "Come, Hetherege," he said, "will you walk? I shall marry now. If I have a son, it will be a race between him and Alfred's. '*Solvuntur risu tabulæ*,' cousins. Let the old man's money go to the devil, to whom he originally left it."

Simpson and Murdoch, however, were not quite so cynical as Talbot. They

laid their heads together, and resolved on law ; and to law they went.

So began the great lawsuit, which, at one time, seemed as though it would last for ever. It began with an effort on the part of Simpson to get it set aside on the grounds of insanity ; but this was only the beginning. Other pleas and other interests came in, until in 1830 there were nearly forty suitors in the case, while the man who stopped the way—Reginald—was only fifty. But here we anticipate. Much had come and gone before that, which we shall have to narrate. Geoffry Talbot married, and had two sons ; they had eleven sons ; the two eldest of these eleven had the one three sons, the other two. Again, Murdoch married, and had nine grandsons, who assisted in peopling Australia with sons. Mrs. Simpson, who married her cousin, had two sons, who had seven sons, who

assisted in the population of the United States and British North America. All these men and boys had some hazy interest in the estate, down to Murdoch's youngest grandson James, and Simpson's eldest grandson George.

In startling contrast to this wonderful increase of possible claimants in the other branches of the family, the Hetheredges did not increase at all. Alfred died, leaving one son—the *auctor mali*—Reginald, who, after the death of old Talbot, Simpson, and Murdoch, was devoutly wished dead by his numerous relations. Reginald, again, had only one son, Charles, of whom we shall see a great deal more; but who had rather less right (at least, so the family considered at one time) to exist in this world than his father had.

At the beginning of the great lawsuit the family quarrelled pretty heavily; but

in the lapse of ages, seeing that there was no likelihood of a settlement without murdering our friend Reginald (who has to go hand in hand with us through the story), they became as fond of one another as relations usually are, and assisted one another to accumulate rather handsome fortunes. They came originally of a hard griping stock, and were all pretty well off when the genius of the family, Digby, died. We shall not see very many of them out of all the host; but it is necessary to say something about the numerous sons and grandsons.

Talbot had shaken the pagoda tree rather heavily, and so the Talbots had a perfect Pleiades of stars against their name at the India House; and, besides this, they had a tradition that if a certain deed could ever be found, Alton Towers was their own—a tradition which gave them great prestige, and which caused

them to treat Lord Shrewsbury publicly as an interloper.

Murdoch's *specialité* was woolstapling. He was one of the first to see the capabilities of Australia, and so his nine grandsons either ruled small principalities in the new South land, or drove to their offices in London in tilburys.

Simpson was a Manchester man, and his seven grandsons found both Manchester and Charlestown very agreeable places.

William Hetherege had started at a disadvantage with his richer relations. He was, as we have mentioned before, a clerk in the House of Commons, and was a man very highly respected and looked up to—a man of grooves and routine, who had been so long in office that he remembered Speaker Onslow and Sir Robert Walpole. He was in very good society; indeed, in far better than

any of the others were, who, with the exception of Talbot, were not by any means refined. His son Alfred came to the desk while his father was still there, and married on his appointment. The result was, as we have seen, the unfortunate baby.

William Hetheredge took his £10,000 without dispute, and partly spent it in good living. Such as he did not spend got into the whirl of the lawsuit and disappeared, causing him to die very poor, leaving Alfred nothing but his salary, his young wife's grave, and his motherless child Reginald. The family saw little of Alfred, and less of the child; indeed, the wit of the family averred that the child Reginald was never invited to see any of his little cousins, unless they had scarlet fever, measles, or small-pox. Whatever truth there was in this cruel allegation, one thing is certain—the boy

grew up without any serious ailment, and, not content with robbing all his young relations of their inheritance, insisted on being much better looking, more amiable, and more clever than any one of them. Alfred, being a man of moderate means, naturally chose an expensive school for the boy ; and he was sent to Eton, with a view of going into the army. He displayed considerable talents at Eton ; and in the opinion of all who knew him, he was much too good for a marching regiment. However, he entered one, and managed to be very highly respected and loved by his brother officers, and adored by his men. His necessary allowances were, of course, of some trouble to his father ; but Reginald was so very careful, that they got on very well, to the great astonishment of the family, who considered them as very little better than mendicants. When

they heard that Reginald was about to unite his fortunes and handsome person to those of a young lady of beauty and wealth, they said that it was really time something did turn up in that quarter. When it was understood, however, that the young lady had only £900, they washed their hands of the whole beggarly business, and left father and son to go to destruction together.

Reginald's charming manners and great ability made him some powerful friends; and the young lady he had married, though not rich, was exceedingly well connected. It was thought eminently necessary that he should be provided for, and his friends, not his relations, contrived to ring such continuous peals of bells in his praises into the ears of a minister, that at length, with much bad language, the minister gave Reginald a place which he wanted for some one

else ; and he left the army for the writing table with a salary of £500 a year, rising to £800.

He lost his father and wife nearly at the same time, and was left alone with his only child Charles. One affliction brought on another, each of which he bore with a curious gentle endurance, which was one of the most remarkable traits in his character, and which never, during all which followed, deserted him. His father died, and he had scarcely recovered the grief which this event caused to an extremely sensitive and affectionate disposition, when the overwhelming affliction of his wife's death followed ; she being the third Mrs. Hetheredge in succession who had died leaving only one son, which the other branches of the family considered a judgment on the Hetheredges for the iniquity of existing at all. Reginald had always

been a very careful accountant, but in the absence of mind which followed his last grief he let the affairs of his office get into irretrievable confusion. By signing wrong papers without examination, he had permitted a fraudulent clerk to embezzle some £18,000, for which he was made answerable ; he was left with a growing boy and a salary of £200 a year until the monstrous debt was paid.

There now came to Reginald a period of continual debts and duns and anxiety, which would have soured for ever a man with a less philosophical mind than his. Executions in his house occurred more than once—always, fortunately, when the boy Charles was away. He made acquaintance with the bailiff's man, and learnt many curious things from him. When he was arrested he used to make friends in the sponging houses. All these debts, which so cruelly worried the

innocent, stricken man, were mere comparative trifles contracted when he was in a good and rising position, perhaps amounting to about one year of his old income. The policy of the family invariably was the same—to let matters come to a crisis as above mentioned, then pay the sum required, taking it in turn ; and afterwards have their money's worth out of Reginald in a good scolding ; after which they would go to church in pewsful, and confess themselves miserable sinners with extreme satisfaction. Charles used to say that these were the only true words they ever spoke ; but we shall see what kind of young gentleman he was immediately.

On more than one occasion, when the deputed member of the family arrived at the scene of disaster, he found everything paid and most entirely comfortable. Whenever this happened, and the mem-

ber asked who had paid, it was always the same people—Messrs. Cox and Greenwood, Craig's Court, Charing Cross. That eminent firm seemed to have quite a passion for Reginald, which was as great a mystery to the family as it was to Reginald himself. Neither the family nor he, however, had the least wish to make impertinent inquiries, or to look at one single tooth in the mouth of that gift horse.

Well fitted for society, and liking it, Reginald gave it up entirely, and, much against his will, lapsed into a Bohemian sort of life. He had no cause to complain of his old friends, but he was perforce shabby when not at his office, at which place one well-cut frock coat was made to last him four years. He certainly kept up acquaintance with his more intimate friends, but his visits to them were few and far between.

The boy Charles grew up a fine, handsome lad, with a great deal of promise, and a very sharp tongue. He was in a very different position to his father, as far as the family were concerned. Nothing could possibly take place until that wretched Reginald was out of the way. *Then* the boy would be heir to untold thousands. Lionel Talbot, a young barrister with nothing on earth to do but to mind other people's affairs, made out, by a careful calculation, that Charles would be worth about three millions of money. Aunt Hester Simpson, on the other hand, calculated the sum at five hundred pounds; the plain truth being that, according to one theory, Charles would have come into about ten millions, and to another that he would have to go into the bankruptcy court the moment he came of age. Charles and the vast majority of the family, however, believed

him to be possessed of almost incredible wealth. The family, considering his father a drug in the market, a person only to be tolerated, and hardly that, took considerable notice of the boy at one time as a possible heir. The father, with some of them, was a certainty and no good whatever. He had gone to the bad. The boy probably would also; but, as church-goers, they read in the Funeral Service that a man brought nothing into this world, and that it was certain that he could take nothing out. Consequently Charles Hetherege could not possibly take a million or so of money away with him. He must leave it behind him: he might as well leave it in their direction as in another. The boy, therefore, was a person to be cultivated. Unfortunately the boy knew his own power, and was utterly bumptious, even with Aunt Hester.

He liked her the best of his relations, but he was utterly devoted to his father, and looked on the family as his natural enemies. Aunt Hester was supposed to have testamentary designs towards the boy to the sum of a few hundreds, but she was entirely wrapped up in a certain cousin James Murdoch, who would get the main part of her property.

Miss Hester Simpson, the great novelist, whose name is known from China to Peru, was the nearest relation which the boy Charles had next to his father. She was third cousin once removed. When and how she was removed, we are unable to find out ; but she was almost certainly third cousin. She had no interest in the lawsuit at all, but was generally considered head of the family, for what reasons does not exactly appear. She loved her relations as well as the dead merchant Digby, or the boy Charles.

As regards the latter, the mention of any one of their names brought a howl from him. He had to go and stay at their different houses, and his father was always under pecuniary obligations to them. He repaid their hospitality by behaving as badly as he could. He had always a certain sense of reserved power, and the knowledge that the family wished his father out of the way. On one occasion, in early youth, he was extremely naughty in the house of Aunt Hester. Aunt Hester rebuked him, pointing out that boys who took stolen apples to bed with them, not only lost their chance of eternal bliss in the next world, but ruined their insides in this. The boy replied, "Fiddle-de-dee! You are precious careful of *my* inside, because I shall have a heap of money when pa dies. But I wouldn't trust any one of you" (meaning the family) "to make

pa's tea." After Aunt Hester told this to the family, some of them deliberated whether poisoning the boy as well as the father would not be a justifiable action, and she sat silent.

Aunt Hester was as capable of doing such a thing as we are. But she wrote a great number of novels (we mean a great many for that time; the exact number is six), and consequently had to put herself, theoretically, into a vast number of situations, into which she could not have got in the ordinary course of affairs, any more than she could have poisoned Charles Hetherege. She used to get herself nearly sent to the bad by a wicked man (a nobleman, of course), and get out of the scrape in the most wonderful manner; in her great novel, "*The Triumph of Virtue*," she actually marries the villain who has planned her ruin. She wrote such a transcendently

virtuous novel, that the world read it with awe, and went to its ordinary places of amusement in sackcloth and ashes. The very loosest people read it, because Aunt Hester, in her tremendous virtue, sailed a little near the wind—as was of course necessary, for how can you make vice hideous without describing it? Aunt Hester saw that her great moral purpose would fall dead unless she let her readers know what she meant, and she did it, so that there was no doubt about her meaning. Her first four great novels, after lying unread for a time, were twenty years ago taken up again and praised very highly. Some people said that they were almost improper, and others said that they are outrageously dull: we consider the people who said so to have been idiotic. Still the four novels became the fashion again, and it was demanded, in some quarters,

that all writers of fiction must model themselves on Aunt Hester. Some of them did so, and were highly successful.

Aunt Hester's four novels were a great success; her fifth was not so. While she wrote about young ladies, she was masterly; whenever she attempted men, she made a failure, for the simple reason that she knew nothing of them. In her fifth novel, however, she showed really great genius. She depicted the boy Charles Hetherege as she thought that he would be in his future life. She was very nearly right, and all the twaddle she ever wrote may be forgiven for that one sketch. It is of no use to us, because she wrote of him *in posse*, and we only *in esse*. It was a dead failure, because her mistakes about the details of young men's lives were really too absurd. Still we think it her best novel. It embodied the idea that a boy like Charles

Hetheredge could come to no good; in fact, that he was what the Americans call "a limb." She expressed that opinion to Charles frequently, while writing her novel, and the rest of the family were quite of her opinion.

Charles was rather glad of this. He liked his father's company best of all, though his father talked very little to him.

"You can't have any money till I die," the father said once.

"Let us do without, then," said the boy.

On another occasion the boy said, "I say, pa, what do you think of Aunt Hester's novels?"

"They analyze female souls which are not in any way worth it," said the father.

It is evident to all rightminded persons that the more the boy was away

from this awful heretic of a father, who denounced Aunt Hester's novels as "bread and butter spiced with impropriety," the better for him. The family took action. "Limb" as the boy might be, it was evident that the boy would have a large sum of money some day, and that he would be a valuable *parti* for some twenty pretty young cousins—for the family had gone in not only for wealth, but for beauty, and, breeding from selected stocks, had attained a very high average of the latter quality. The boy might have married any one of his cousins. Had the family been Mahomedan instead of Christian, he might have had a harem. As it was, the boy was a disreputable young scapegrace—a limb of Satan—a brand to be snatched from the burning, in spite of its violent, and partly successful efforts to get burnt.

The family continued to burn their fingers more or less severely about this brand for a number of years. At last, in comparing excoriations of fingers in a grand family conclave or palaver, it was unanimously thought that the brand must go to a hot place, with its father Reginald, and that the only thing to be tried was cold water. We anticipate very much here, however, because that resolution was only come to when Reginald was seen to be good for eighty.

CHAPTER V.

REGINALD BEGINS TO SOW THE WIND.

REGINALD gave his son Charles a very good education. The obstructive Reginald had read a great deal, and he gave the benefit of his reading to his boy. The family had no difficulty at all in placing the boy at Eton ; it was as easy to them as apprenticing him to a blacksmith.

Reginald thought that it was for the best, the more so that by the boy's being at Eton, he could go furtively down by the coach and see him. The expenses of a King's scholar were not large, and the father worked extra hard at journalism so as to take a few guineas to the boy,

and possibly distribute a few to his friends. Charles remembered himself at Eton as a well-dressed and rich boy, well *répandu* with every one except the masters. The Sunday afternoons on the terrace at Windsor with his father and his companions were golden Sundays for him. His father was, in the eyes of the family, a man beggared by his own carelessness ; he had signed away, at one stroke, £18,000 of the public money, and the nation had treated him very kindly in allowing the chance of signing away £18,000 more, with a salary of £200 a year. But the boys cared nothing for this. To them Hetherege's father was the most agreeable and popular man they had ever met : a very easy-going gentleman in a blue coat and brass buttons—a lazy gentleman. But on one occasion the lazy gentleman, who was sitting and watching the bathers, was seen to hurl himself

(blue coat, brass buttons, and all) in a parabolic curve into the water, over the heads of the assembled swimmers. A boy in the middle of the river had got the cramp; another boy had tried to help him in the struggle, but could not cry out for the water in his mouth. Reginald Hetherege was the first to see the disaster, and had got to the drowning boys before any one. A hundred and fifty bare young arms bore him to the bank with his prize. After this the boys would have done anything for him. He was an old Etonian himself; and if universal suffrage was anything but a sham, he would have been head-master. He was taken to the tutor to be dried, and the tutor pointed out to him the awful responsibility which he incurred in forming the mind of a great capitalist such as his son, a boy who would certainly, if he gave up his eccentricities, be in

the House of Lords. Reginald, who was in a shirt and a pair of trousers belonging to the tutor, looked at his drying clothes dolefully, and wondered if the tutor would want the five-and-twenty pounds which he had to pay that afternoon. He thought he had better not say anything about it, but quietly pay it. If he asked for time it would look mean, for the money was for luxuries which the boy had ordered for himself; and, besides, the non-payment might hurt the boy. So he put on his own trousers sorrowfully, and, with the independence of a Briton not in debt, asked the tutor whether he would explain to him what his son Charles's eccentricities were.

“He,” said Reginald, buttoning his coat, “has been two years at Eton, and this is the first complaint I have heard of him.”

The tutor called to his assistance a

master, and then Reginald heard such a tale about his son's eccentricities as surprised even him, Bohemian as he was. It was obvious that the "family" were right, and that he had for a son, either by incubus or succubus, a very remarkable young gentleman indeed.

This perfectly graceless man went to London on the box seat of the coach next morning, and when he was deposited in London, the coachman deposed that the box-seat was mad, for that he had done nothing but giggle all the way from Windsor, and had given him a sovereign. Reginald had chosen to laugh at his son's eccentricities instead of rebuking them; though to his credit it must be said he never heard a hundredth part of them, or he would never have laughed.

Charles's eccentricities were grave enough. Eton was pretty free and easy in those days, and, by the noble old way

of giving boys liberty, of letting each boy find his place, was turning out *men*, not dummies. It is objected to some of our public schools that they throw boys into *temptation*. We ask which of them throws a boy into half as much temptation as a boy of the labouring class has to endure? We ask the oldest college tutor this question—What class of boys are the *most trouble to him*, the public school boys, who have seen life and know to some extent the value of money, or the poor unhappy babies who come straight from their mothers apron-strings? We think that college tutors will say that the public school men give them least trouble.

Free, easy, and liberal as Eton was and is, she might seem to some people a little behind the march of intellect in the case of Charles Hetherege. Either that audacious young fellow was before

his time, or Eton was behind hers. We express no opinion whatever; in these days of liberty, no one likes to express an opinion. If we dared to express an opinion, however, we should be inclined to say that Eton on the whole was right, and that Charles Hetherege was wrong. He kept both tutor and father in ignorance of things like these: they would have thought that a boy of fifteen is not the person to decide about the mortality of the soul. Charles Hetherege did that at fifteen years old, and was very emphatic on the matter.

Later on, he was in holy orders, preaching beautifully at Arcis-sur-Mer, after having gained a great reputation as a preacher. That is perfectly correct. Charles Hetherege tried to prove logically the mortality of the soul, and the utter extinction of the spiritual part of us after death. But that was at Eton.

It would have been a good thing if that had been his only eccentricity in that great school of learning.

The fact was that Charles was “fast.” So fast, in fact, that a poor, wretched old lumbering machine like Eton, felt it very difficult to keep up with him. Eton has seen her great radicals. She has nourished to her bosom such astounding democratic poets as Shelley, but she will not stand everything. When a youth at Eton takes to cursing things in general in good iambics, Eton hopes that the time may come when that youth, if of promise, may take to *blessing* things in general. But when a youth takes to cursing things in particular, Eton will not stand it without consideration. If a youth sings the praises of wine in Latin hexameters, that youth will be rewarded and extolled. But if that youth carries out his theory of the pleasures of wine

by drinking with the soldiers in Windsor, Eton will have none of it. Another pleasure to which youth is addicted, that of fighting, may be celebrated in theoretical Latin, but not in practice. (Here we are trenching on very low grounds.) Once more, a Latin epigram is a fine thing against a Roman Emperor, but when directed against a blameless head-master is not to be tolerated.

Here we feel inclined to draw a veil. Aunt Hester always used to tell us that she was going to draw the veil, whenever she came across anything at all inconvenient to be mentioned. She always told you that she was going to draw the veil very solemnly. Then she did it with two rows of asterisks at the end of a chapter. Then she started another chapter, and told you every mortal thing that she had said that nothing on earth would induce her to reveal, and a great

deal more. It was this feminine habit of not being able to hold her tongue that gives that air of frank reality to her stories, which Reginald called more than once in print extreme impropriety. We will copy her method of art as little as possible at this point.

CHAPTER VI.

AND BEGINS TO REAP THE WHIRLWIND.

CHARLES HETHEREGE just saved going to the bad publicly. His genius covered a multitude of sins: with all his faults, faults of which Eton knew little, Eton as a whole was proud of him. The books which had been put into his hands were almost exclusively pagan, and he not only imitated their style in a marvellous manner, about which Eton knew, but unfortunately assimilated their contents in a manner which Eton could *never* know.

His splendid scholarship saved him from expulsion, and he went in due course of time to King's, where he was

received with more curiosity than welcome. Six months after he had been at Cambridge his servant, coming into his room, found that he had not been in bed all night. No one had seen him go out; he had been cheerful, nay, more than cheerful in Hall, but he was gone. A tremendous sensation was made about his disappearance, and the Cam was dragged. A week after a letter came to the Provost from his father, stating that his son was with him; that, finding himself sickening for a dangerous fever, he had fled in the beginning of his delirium to his natural protector, his father. That was perfectly satisfactory to the college authorities.

What passed in the week before his father wrote? Where was he during those six days before his father wrote to the Provost?

Money was not very abundant with Reginald Hetherege, yet Avery, the

Cookham boatman, mysteriously started a beershop, which afterwards grew into a public-house, with a spirit licence. He called his beershop The Reginald, and persistently held his tongue to the day of his death whilst tolerably sober. We will not give the long details made by Avery to Reginald Hetherege, which were ended by Avery saying that Charles was as innocent about the matter as a babe unborn. Mr. Avery's notions of "innocence" are of one kind, yours and ours are different. It is perfectly certain that Charles did not believe in his own innocence, though he was in the world's way innocent. Queer fellow as Charles was, he was incapable of villiany to a woman. Had he been less romantic on that point, matters might have gone differently with him ; and here we must quit this part of the subject.

There has been a Roman Catholic

settlement and an old Roman Catholic family not one hundred miles from Cookham ever since—when? Let us say since the times of Augustine himself. The family fought against the Spanish Armada, refused to have anything to do with the Gunpowder Plot, and refused to touch the later Stuarts with the tongs. Yet Roman Catholic they remained, ruling a large tenantry of Protestants with a gentle, kindly rule, and making about one convert in a century, and that rather against their wills and after due examination. This family always had a priest as their spiritual director, who was always a finished gentleman, and who was very often consulted by Protestants in matters which related more to this wicked world than to those of the next.

Monseigneur Morton, the family priest of these times, had two objects in

view: the one to keep the family in the faith, and the other to demolish and destroy Mosheim. The first of his objects was a very easy one. A — was as likely to turn Protestant, as the Sultan is to turn Jew. To begin with, it would be bad *ton*; and, moreover, it would carry with it an incalculable loss of prestige in the best society in France and Italy. Conversion in that family was never thought of; the idea was impossible; so, as far as regarded his spiritual cure, Monseigneur Morton thought that he earned his position rather easily. The heretic Mosheim, however, gave him more trouble than he had calculated on, and he worked like a horse to demolish him, not even staying to supper after complines, giving to the housekeeper great anxiety.

“Woman,” he said to her once, when she brought him up some cold chicken

and a glass of wine, “Avaunt! I am fighting the devil, and, like St. Anthony, I will do it fasting.”

It was the feast of the patron saint of the house he loved so well. The family were away—the main of them in Italy and France. The three boys of the family, sons of the good old man’s heart, were at their different employments in the world—one in the army, one in the navy, and one, his own Benjamin, with the Austrian mission on the Upper Nile—and so the old man determined to have a dissipation, and the housekeeper assisted him in his nefarious object. He had grilled chicken, with weak claret and water, in his own room, and then he got out Mosheim and his manuscript.

Under the influence of the weak claret and water Mosheim appeared to him a low contemptible dog. Mosheim had

made the same *petitio principii* as himself, therefore Mosheim had no right to carry it out half-way. Then he took some more weak claret and water, and saw the end of all Protestantism. He was so elated that he looked round, and then locked the door of his room.

He went to a closet guiltily, unlocked it carefully, and took out something stealthily. It was a box. He listened carefully at the door, and then he opened the box.

He shut it again. "The servants may not be gone to bed," he said; "I might be discovered." The silence of night was over the house, however, and his was the only light burning. He opened the box again, and took out——

A cigar. He lit it, and, as he sank back in his chair smoking it, the beautiful old face seemed to ripple into quiescence; and our opinion is that if

Mosheim and his patron, Frederick the Great, could have entered the room at that moment, they would have had a hearty welcome.

A-ha ! Captain Morton, of Napoleon's Cuirassiers, you are not the first man whom the women have driven into the Church. Let us see, Monseigneur Morton, it was before you went to Moscow that she gave you the last kiss. When you met her after Leipzig she had just been married. A-ha ! Captain and Monseigneur Morton, she seduced you from your allegiance to England, and then threw you over like an old shoe. The women will do it.

Monseigneur, they will never fight fair. They stab you to the heart and leave you to groan. Cruel ? Yes ; but who would miss their cruelty ?

“ Yet,” said Monseigneur, “ she drove me into the bosom of the Church, and I

have found peace. Yes, yes ! yes, yes ! She has boys now. I should like to get hold of one of them and train him for the—Church—— Well, her boys ought to make good soldiers, if they have their mother's eyes.

“ He is an infidel, and so I suppose that her boys will go to mischief. I should like to save one of them, for I was very fond of her. I shall have another cigar, I think ; tobacco seems to bring back old memories. Raleigh was not a real heretic, you know ; that old catamaran, Queen Bess, believed in the real presence ; besides, it stands to reason that no heretic *could* have invented tobacco. Ho ! I am getting sleepy, and the ghost of Mosheim may rest in his grave for to-night. The barometer is very low. Ha ! I thought so ; there is hail.”

It was not hail, however, but gravel

thrown against the window. He opened it at once, and asked, "Who is there?"

"A soul in desperate distress," said a young voice.

"Go to the door at the left," said the old priest promptly, "and I will let you in. Are you alone?"

"Yes; she is gone where I shall never go," was the answer.

"Come in quickly. It might be one of *her* boys," he added.

He went down to the postern door with a shaded candle. He admitted some one. When he came up to his own room he looked to see who it was. A tall, handsome young man, with a budding beard, and a deadly pale face, evidently in the first phase of some desperate illness.

The priest laid his hand on his shoulder, and said, "What are you?"

"An infidel, a villain, and a murderer. Can you give me peace?"

“No. Do you mean that you are an actual murderer, or only one by construction?”

“By construction.”

“A woman, I suppose,” said the priest.

“Yes.”

“That is bad, very bad. What do you want me to do? Can the law convict you?”

“No; I wish to God it could.”

“Once more,” said the priest, “what am I to do?”

“You Romanists have monasteries, places of seclusion, where a man may repent of his sins, and lead a new life. I want to go into one of them. I have heard of you, and I want your assistance. I will believe anything, and accept anything, if you will give me peace.”

“I know nothing,” said Monsieur Morton. “You have a conscience, which is something. Have you any relations?”

“Yes; my father is Reginald Hetheredge, of the Home Office.”

“And your name?”

“Charles.”

“It is a pity that you half ruined some at Eton with your opinions before you left,” said the Roman Catholic. “But you have come to me for advice. We must go to your father—you are not in a fit state to judge for yourself. Drink that glass of claret, and keep awake.”

The Roman Catholic grooms and their horses were not long in getting ready on the summons of the director. On this occasion the doctor and the master of the house were away, and so the spiritual head had the grooms out of bed in five minutes, and the carriage ready in twenty. The master of the house might have whistled to get the same arrangement accomplished in an hour. We heretics, who have had

the thunders of the Vatican hurled at our heads so long, and without any visible effect, may wonder at this, but it is undoubtedly the fact that, although the anger of the Vatican may pass over the head of a king without hurting it, yet that at second hand, in the hands of a priest, it is very powerful. A sensible priest acting on Irish servants is either the master of the house or a weak man.

It was in the cold, dull daybreak of a rainy morning, when Reginald was awakened from his sleep by a double knock. His servants paid not the smallest attention to it, and by long experience he knew that he must answer the door himself. He did so. He was at once pushed aside by a Popish priest and an Irish groom, who carried a young man between them into the dining-room, and laid him on the sofa. Reginald

recognized his own son, and in his confusion said, “Is he dead?”

“No,” said the priest, “not yet; he is very ill. Thank God, he gave me your direction correctly. See, he is going to speak again. Dennis, away with you in a hurry. Take the carriage to the nearest mews, and run to that direction and fetch the doctor out of his bed.”

The priest and Reginald were alone with the sick man. Charles was fearfully ill, and was beginning to mutter.

“Send your servants out of the way, he is going to talk,” said Monseigneur Morton.

Reginald locked a door at the end of the passage, and then said, “What is the matter?”

“I can’t say; something terrible, I fear. He came to me last night, apparently believing himself to have committed some awful crime. He wanted

to join the Holy Church, and become a monk. I, as an old soldier, saw that it was a case more for the doctor than the priest, and so I brought him to you."

"Yes. I thank you a thousand times," said Reginald. "Has there been any *esclandre*?"

"I fancy not from what he told me on the road, before he got utterly delirious; I should say not. What he says to me persistently is that he was not the principal in some great crime. Hush! he is going to speak again. You have locked the outside door."

The sick man rose up in one of those paroxysms of brain fever which are more horrible than insensibility—even then death. He knew his father, and spoke to him with a dreadful hoarse voice:—

"Father, father! come to me, my own father!"

Reginald had his arm round his neck

in a moment. He kissed his son, and the breath of the unhappy boy's body came on his face like a hot flame.

“ Father, it was the wretch himself; she told me so.”

“ What wretch, my darling ? ”

“ James Murdoch. Hell gapes for him.”

“ Has he been with you, my boy ? ”

“ Always, when you were not. Has he any reason to drag me to the devil ? ”

“ Yes, he may have his objects to serve; but he is our relation, and Aunt Hester's favourite. Confide in me, my boy; I would die to help you.”

“ Is it true what James insists on—that death is extinction ? ”

“ No; you know it is false. Where did you get such notions? Put your trust in God.”

“ Ay, ay; so cold, so calm. She hardly seemed dead. I thought that she smiled when I kissed her forehead. They

had done up her hair as she used to wear it. They had dried it, too—that was kind of them. Be good to Mrs. Avery for doing that, father; the child looked so pretty in death.

“Hark!” he cried in a terrible voice, “that is the last trump. We are all ready here. Arraign James Murdoch first, oh, Lord of Heaven! Dog! come from your hiding-place, or I will take you single-handed before the judgment-seat. To kill my father—my poor innocent father! Gentlemen, I have done my best, and I thank you for your compliments. My father will be glad to hear of my double first. How they knock at her coffin lid, but she sleeps sound.”

Dr. Benson, whose loud knock had produced the last outbreak, was of opinion that Charles was suffering from brain fever brought on by overwork. He had a son at Trinity, who had told him

this. Charles, with an excitable brain, had taken up with the most singular opinions at Eton. He had read English and French authors until the last few months, to the neglect of real study, and had utterly overworked himself to keep a high place in classics. Dr. Benson felt it his duty to say to the young man's father that he had a character for dissipation—not, however, in the way of drink. There was nothing to prevent the young man saving both his life and his reason, if he were kept from bad companions.

“When I speak of bad companions, sir,” said Dr. Benson, “you know to whom I allude. How could you possibly allow such an intimacy to spring up? Your feelings as a father, sir, might have prevented you from handing over your only child to the machinations of a young man like James Murdoch, whose

character at Cambridge is pretty notorious, according to my son."

The unfortunate Reginald was so used to getting into trouble on every possible or impossible occasion, that he was not in the least degree surprised by this outbreak of the doctor's. He had not the very wildest idea what the doctor was talking about. He supposed he was in the wrong, he always was. He had long come to the conclusion that to be in the wrong might be predicated of him as an inseparable accident, almost a quality. So he only asked the doctor about his son's medicine, and bowed him out. After that, he and the priest carried the now quiet Charles upstairs, and put him to bed.

"He is right enough now," said the priest, when they came downstairs ; "let us have some breakfast."

"I do not expect we shall get any," said Reginald ; "at least, not before the

usual time. You see that I have no power of command—I never had; and if I tell my servants to do anything, they at once leave the house with a portion of my plate. I never prosecute, they know *that*. My family object to me that I do not prosecute; but, then, if I did they would equally object to my doing so. I am mainly dependent on my family, and my family naturally object to me. Still, being always in a state of siege by my servants, I keep my garrison furtively victualled. If you can breakfast off pork-pie and claret, I can unlock that cupboard and give it you. I never have any words with my servants, because I let them have their own way. On two occasions they have set the house on fire by reading the novels of my cousin Hester in bed; but, although I have put the fire out, I have never complained. On one occasion, when I saved a young woman's

life, she violently assaulted me and said what was not true. Since then I have doubled my insurance, and they may all burn together. As a matter of detail, Hester Simpson is not my aunt at all ; we only call her so for testamentary purposes ; she is, as I believe, my third cousin. I only retain the key of this cupboard as the last remnant of my independence as a man and a Briton. Will you breakfast on such fare as I can give you ? You will have this sauce with it—the gratitude of a broken heart, which still beats on, for your conduct to my boy.”

“ I want to talk to you,” was the priest’s sudden answer, with a keen look. “ I want to talk to you very much. I know more about you than you think. You wrote that article in the —— about the action of the Bishop of Macon.”*

* Of course we mean the Bishop of A——n, but there are personalities enough flying about in the world without our adding to them.

“Yes.”

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself, that is my opinion.”

“I always am,” said Reginald.

“That is a sign of repentance,” said Monseigneur. “I hardly know how to go on with the dialogue. At your death your son has a large fortune?”

“Yes.”

“And others?”

“Others? I tried to make it out once, and stopped short at sixty of them, or forty, or some number.”

“Is James Murdoch one?”

“Yes. James Murdoch will come in for a considerable sum; that is to say, in the bounds of possibility. If he is hung his share of the money goes to the king.”

“You know his character?”

“I don’t know much about him. He was in the Turkish army, but he made a mess of his affairs, and they would not

stand him ; he returned to England with a view of taking holy orders. He will have Hester Simpson's money. He is needy, because he came to me to borrow ten pounds as a relation. I had eight-and-sixpence in the house, and I gave him five shillings, which he afterwards paid."

"That looks very black ; I never knew him do that before," said Monseigneur. "It so happens that I know the man, and so does Benson, who attends most of our Roman Catholic families. When he mentioned his name I knew it. If he has an interest in your death, be careful."

"But I don't want to live," said Reginald.

"Then your interests are identical," said Monseigneur. "I hardly know what to say. I can tell you this : that fellow whom you allowed your son to associate with—is—no better than he ought to be. You heard what your son

said, and he will tell you more, I dare say. The young man is a renegade from nothing to Catholicism, from Catholicism to Mahomedanism. From that faith he returned to the bosom of the Church, from which he has been excommunicated. I wish to say little about him. We have young fools in our faith as you have in yours, and the man knows more than— Well, I would not trust my life in his hands. He is a spy to begin with, and he lives on that."

"A Jesuit spy?" asked Reginald.

"You foolish man! do you suppose that the Jesuits trust their work to such foul hands as his? You little know them."

"What the boy said just now was only babble," said Reginald.

"Was it?" said Monseigneur.

"Then I had better live on eggs, so as to avoid poison," said Reginald.

“Nonsense! only take care of that man.”

“But there are forty others, as I make out,” said Reginald. “Let us talk no more nonsense. Hark! the boy is talking again. Come to me in the afternoon.”

“I will,” said Monseigneur, and walked away, saying to himself, “I will do nothing unfair, but if that boy lives he is almost certain to come to us. The terror of the crime which has evidently been proposed to him, and the reaction from his infidelity will certainly bring him.”

There were, however, accidents in the way, and Charles lived to be an ornament of the Established Church of Great Britain and Ireland.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STRUGGLE.

CHARLES's illness was a long one, but Dr. Benson and his fine constitution pulled him through. By degrees, after being utterly delirious for a long time, he began to recover consciousness. During his extreme delirium he had always shown the greatest horror at the sight of his father—so great that the poor gentleman was forbidden the room. The first sign of his mending was his asking for his father. He asked this of a tall gentleman in black, who was sitting beside him, and with whom he had been feebly trying to join in prayer.

There was a little stir in the room, and his father was beside him.

“Father,” he said, “I had an evil dream, but I am thoroughly awakened from it. Is James Murdoch dead?”

“No, my boy.”

“Ah! I suppose it was all a dream, was it not?”

“Oh, all a dream,” said Reginald. “Was it not, Mr. Morley?”

But Mr. Morley was gone, and had left father and son alone together.

“I am very weak, father; shall I die?”

“No, boy, no.”

“I am glad of that. I was not fit for it. I wish, father, that you would send for Monseigneur Morton.”

That was promised, and Reginald went away to talk to the Rev. Mr. Morley.

“He is better,” said Reginald.

“I know it,” said the rector. “I am

glad you sent for me. The boy has been trying to pray with me."

"Thank God!" said Reginald.

"I am glad to hear you say even *that* much, Mr. Hetherege."

"I am going to be scolded, I know," said Reginald; "but I am so used to it, that I really have ceased to care much about it. But might I ask what you mean, for you mean more than you say?"

"I do," said the rector. "It is notorious that you winked at the boy's dissipation, and encouraged him in his infidelity."

"Who told you that?"

"Several members of your own family, sir."

"My family. Oh, I see. Yes, I quite understand."

"Is it true, Mr. Hetherege?"

"Well, if it is," said Reginald, "it is the first word of truth they have ever

spoken of me or the boy. All which the schoolmasters practically told me about him was that he was a strange boy, and held strange opinions. I have been with them since ; they knew no more, and they could tell me no more. I never rebuked the boy, for I knew nothing either ; and if I had rebuked him, he might have quarrelled with me, and then I should have quarrelled with the only friend except my father Alfred, which I ever had in this wicked world, so help me God ! ”

Reginald did not bluster or talk loud when he said this, but he said it so quietly and so mournfully that the rector was deeply touched, and said, like a man,

“ Can you make a friend of me, Mr. Hetheredge ? ”

“ I ’ll try, ” said Reginald, without a spark of emotion, “ if God takes my boy from me. Do you think He will ? ”

“No, no ! I do not think He will. Come, Mr. Hetheredge, tell me everything ; you must have some confidence in me, or you would not have sent to me when your boy was dying.”

“I have. I have fought your battle pretty hard for you, when every shilling was of value to me. I have suffered for you, and so I sent for you to suffer with me.”

“That was natural ; but where have you fought my battle, my dear sir ? ”

“In the *Apollo*—who else ? ”

“Good heavens ! Was it you who took my part ? ”

“Yes ; I saw that you were as foully misrepresented as I was, and I stuck to you. The last famous article I delayed until nearly one o’clock in the day, and the editor was gone. I knew that they could not go to press without it, and I knew that it would lead to my dismissal.

I was dismissed ; the *Apollo*, instead of disclaiming it, tried to back out of it. I lost £100 a-year, and the *Apollo* was ruined.”

“ I owe you more than I can repay, sir ; that was the turning-point of our success—more of this another time. Tell me, your boy has been very dissipated.”

“ I have not known of it. I have hushed up a great scandal, in which I believe my boy to be innocent. If he had ever been ruined it would have been from the harm he did not do, more than from the harm he has done. Come, sir, here is the truth : I got it all at Eton—from the men by the water side.”

And then followed the truth, and it was very bad. But the rector said—

“ He has been punished in a fearful manner. Will no justice overtake this scoundrel ? ”

“ The justice of God, I suppose,” said Reginald.

“ But it is the most infernal villany I ever heard of, to entrap your son into a promise of marriage. Still, there is always reason to believe your son innocent, as far as the world’s ideas of innocence goes; in fact, the result *proves* his innocence.”

“ So I always thought since I knew the truth,” said Reginald.

“ Well, now we will all hope for the best,” said the rector. “ He has had a frightful warning; if he neglects it, he is hopeless.”

“ I wish to tell you, rector, that he has asked to see Monseigneur Morton.”

“ That is good,” said the rector.

“ Is there not danger that, in his present state of mind, he may become a Romanist?”

“ H’m! Well, he might do worse,” said

the rector, “but I think that I will take care of *that*, if no one else gets at him. Mind, if Morton brings — or — with him, I won’t answer ; but I think that I am safe with a pragmatical old gentleman like Morton.”

“ He is a man of seductive and persuasive manners,” said Reginald.

“ Quite so,” said the rector. “ Add also an extremely vain man, who thinks himself quite a match for any three of his more highly-instructed co-religionists ; an old English Catholic, who considers himself slighted by Rome, and will take this case in hand himself jealously as his own, and already sees the Digby money —if there is such a thing—safe in the Church’s coffers, he the divine agent. I think I know the length of *his* foot. A Jesuit would, if he got hold of the boy now, begin by frightening into fits, and then take dominion of him body

and soul. Morton will do nothing of the kind. He will only offer him religious peace, without any freedom at all ; I shall offer him religious peace, with freedom of debate and discussion. Morton will cut him off from one-half of the literature which he loves ; I will read Machiavelli with him if he likes. The Church of Rome, sir, is founded on such a rotten basis that she is afraid of the truth ; the Church of England, sir, is so firmly founded, that she takes science to her bosom as her twin sister, and says——”

What the Church of England was supposed to say to science, according to the rector, we do not know, because Reginald interrupted him, and said,—

“I wanted to tell you how he came to go to this Monseigneur Morton.”

“A-ha !” said the rector, very attentive at once. “Yes ; tell me that. I was puzzled, and I meant to have asked you.”

“Why, one of his great friends at Eton was Lord Rotherfield, who has since turned Romanist ; and he, in his arguments with my boy, used often to talk about this Monseigneur, his holy, quiet life, and that sort of thing.”

“No mystery *there*, then,” said the rector, disappointed.

Charles, during his convalescence, was very penitent and humbled, and received both his clerical friends with quiet gratefulness, without the least idea that his two mentors were playing for him, and that his father was looking on, an intensely interested spectator, wondering whether Cuddesdon would win, or Stonyhurst. (This is a slight historical anticipation, because one at least of those seminaries was not in existence, but it expresses our meaning.) His son never talked to him about religious matters at all—it was the only closed book between them ; he merely knew the result.

“Father,” said Charles suddenly, one morning when they were walking slowly under the elms in Kensington Gardens, “have you got any money?”

Reginald’s trembling hand went on his son’s arm. “How much?” he said.

“I mean this—have you enough to send me back to Cambridge with?”

“Thank God!” cried Reginald, and struggled to a seat. Even when he was there, a tall Life-guardsman came suddenly and put his arms round him. “Your father is ill, sir,” he said; “hold him while I get him some water.”

“No, my good man, thank you,” said Reginald; “I am only overpowered with joy.”

“Curious, ain’t it?” said the Life-guardsman, “the day I got my first stripe I was just the same. Why, you are all abroad, sir, now. What is this guinea for?”

“ For you,” said Reginald ; “ and now go away, like a good young man.”

The corporal looked at the guinea, looked at Reginald, looked at Charles, and tried to look at himself. It was all unreal ; nothing was real but the guinea. That even might turn to be a withered leaf, like a witch’s money, the next time he looked at it ; so, having saluted, he marched off quickly to the nearest tavern, to change it into silver and beer.

“ Father,” said Charles, “ why are you so agitated ? ”

“ I am agitated at your decision, my son. I feared that you might go to Rome ; and that the priests would come between you and me, and take you from me—or, at least, take your heart from me. But now you have decided, and we are both free. Oh, God be blessed that this load is off my mind ! ”

“ Father,” said Charles, “ I see that I have been very inconsiderate. I ought to have told you before, that I never really wavered. But——”

“ You did not like to speak to me on the subject. It was quite natural; we have never spoken on religious subjects, more shame to me. You have cast in your lot with the Church which allows freedom. Say not another word. About money to go back to Cambridge—yes, I have plenty of money to keep you there in decency. You need want for nothing to live like a gentleman.”

“ Where on earth did you get the money, father?” said Charles. “ Have you got any great appointment on a newspaper?”

“ No—on my honour.”

“ Has the family?——”

“ Is your delirium returned that you ask the question, Charles?”

“ Is it Mr. Morley ? ”

“ Mr. Morley has enough to do to keep himself, as you know ; every atom of his income goes in his parish.”

“ Then who is it ? ”

“ The moment I tell you that the money stops,” was Reginald’s reply, given so full in Charles’s eyes that he asked no further questions, but kissed his father, and promised that he would be a good boy. So they walked happily home to tea.

Charles could not sleep for thinking about this money, and how his father got it. His father was an attractive man, and might be going to marry a widow. He had half a dozen of theories, none of which would fit. Perhaps we had better tell our readers more than Charles ever knew.

Charles had not been ill three weeks when Reginald received the following letter :—

“Craig’s Court, June 20th, 1828.

“Messrs. Cox and Greenwood are requested by their client, General Anders, to make the following communication to Mr. Reginald Hetherege :—

“In case of his son Charles making the determination, of his own free will, to return to Cambridge, and to behave himself there with tolerable decency and propriety, all his necessary expenses will be paid by General Anders, under these conditions—

“First. That his father never mentions this fact to him until he has made his own decision; for the carrying out of this stipulation, General Anders entirely trusts to the honour of Mr. Reginald Hetherege.

“Secondly. That the General’s name is never mentioned to any human creature, including Mr. Charles Hetherege. The General has his private reasons for

making this stipulation. He has no desire to get the name of being free with his money—he has been cheated and robbed in his life quite enough already. The money will be immediately stopped if Mr. Reginald Hetherege violates his word in this respect.

“The General would be glad to know if Mr. Reginald Hetherege requires any assistance from the General, who wishes to say that he thinks, although Mr. Hetherege has been very indiscreet, he has not been dishonest.

“If Mr. Hetherege is at all surprised at this assistance coming from a man whom he never saw or heard of in his life, he begs to inform Mr. Hetherege that it is part of a very old debt.

“Any inquiries as to General Ander’s antecedents will be singularly offensive, as, indeed, will be any allusion to this matter, direct or indirect, in any way whatever.”

Reginald scratched his head, and wrote a suitable reply. For himself, he wanted nothing, but accepted the General's assistance to his son with profound gratitude, and promised to comply with all stipulations. "Of course," he added, "as the General puts it in this way, I will not allude to the transactions between us, and will scrupulously attend to his wishes." He took this letter, open, to Craig's Court himself, and saw the head of the firm, who said that nothing could be more proper, and who made arrangements for *his* drawing the money.

"Then you ask nothing, Mr. Hetheredge?"

"Nothing."

"I have the pleasure to hand you a cheque for £200, however," said the head partner. "Will you give me a receipt, please? This is a present from the General to yourself, personally."

Reginald cashed the cheque, putting the notes in his breeches pocket. He then walked away, wondering more than ever at the mystery of Cox and Greenwood.

The fact of the matter was that General Anders and he were intimate acquaintances, and that he owed General Anders five shillings, for which he was certain to be asked the next time he met him. The General and he had got up a small paper on military matters, and the General had found the money; the paper did not pay, and the General and he had had words over the matter, each saying that it was the other's fault. The General was notoriously poor, and a fearful screw with what money he had got; so Reginald could not understand it. He went, however, to General Anders's house, determining to pay the five shillings.

“He is one of the best men in the

army," said Reginald to himself, "and a really good and noble person. It was only last week that he told me that he had taken his children's bread and cast it to the dogs, over the *Red, White, and Blue Gazette*. Well, he will be at home, and I shall know. *Can* he be the man who has helped me so often before? If so, why did he keep his secret until now?"

He was shown in to General Anders who received him with kind-hearted fury.

"You will never do any good in this world, Hetheredge," he said, wringing his hand. "The whole thing is a smash, sir. We must stop, sir — STOP, sir — do you hear me? — and I shall lose £50. The Duke won't stand it, sir; he mentioned the *Gazette* to me at levée angrily. *Gazette*! I shall be in the *Gazette*, and my poor little beggars will be cast into the street. Bankrupt, after so many years' honourable service to my country

—£500 gone in one smash, all my poor savings of a lifetime. I am sorry for you, Hetheredge — you always were a good, genial, biddable fellow ; but you stand to lose nothing, because you have nothing to lose. You don't know what it is to get a snub from the Duke and lose £5,000, as I do this day."

"£5,000!" said Reginald, "you began with £50."

"I say £5,000 ; prospectively, I grant you. I'll say £50,000 if I choose, sir. The property of that journal, well conducted, was worth all £50,000."

"He is not the man," thought Reginald, who said—

"Pray, General, remember one thing —you insisted on conducting the journal yourself."

"I did, sir. I allow it. I did not blame you ; dare you look me in the face and say I did ?"

“No, General.”

“Then don’t bully me, sir. I am a quiet fellow.” (He *looked* it, as he was rampaging up and down the room, with his clenched fists rammed to the bottom of his breeches pockets, and his face scarlet.) “But I will have you know, sir —aye, and I will have His Grace the Duke of Wellington know, that I am not to be bullied either by him or by you. What are you looking at, sir? What are you waiting for?”

“I was waiting until you had done making a fool of yourself,” said Reginald.

“Lord bless you!” said the General, sitting down, “we all do it at times. I dare say you do, quiet as you are. There, it is all right; I shan’t drop more than fifty. I did lose my temper, not so much over the fifty—though that is the deuce to a screw like me, who has to lie awake all night, thinking how the

dickens he can live without getting into debt—as over the Duke's snubbing. We must not kick against the pricks. I am glad you came in, because I wanted some one to quarrel with, and you take it so quietly, and yet stand up in such a manly, kindly way, that you are the very best fellow to quarrel with in the world. Let us have a cigar. Hang this fifty pounds, though!"

"Does it really bother you?" said Reginald, when they began smoking.

"I should think it *did*," said the General, biting his nails; "I don't know where the *deuce* to turn for it. It is for compositors' wages, you see, and the other fellows' wages. I have paid down on the nail until now. I say, Hetheredge, you have been very poor."

"Yes."

"Did you ever—I don't know how to speak exactly, but these men are to be

paid this week—honour binds me, you know. Did you ever, eh ?— ”

“ I don’t know.”

“ Go to the—jeweller’s ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Would you go for me ? I can give you diamonds to the amount of £100 ; can you take them to a jeweller’s for me ? I *can’t* go.”

“ There is no need, Anders. I can lend you £100,” and he pulled out his notes.

There was no mistake about one thing—the astonishment of this General Anders was utterly genuine.

“ Where did you get that money ? ” he asked aghast.

“ I don’t know. Will you borrow some ? ”

“ I will take fifty for a month, as you are in luck. Heaven is my witness I would have seen you further before I would have lent you fifty.”

“ I know that,” said Reginald, laughing; “ and I know, also, that you are about the only man in England who would have had the rare honesty to say so.”

“ To say what ? ”

“ That you would have seen me further before you would have lent *me* that sum.”

“ Did I say that ? ” said the General, blushing deeply ; “ that was a most blackguardly thing to say. But I never can keep my tongue in order. It is true, however. The only words I ever had with my poor wife, who is gone, were about that habit of saying what I meant. Shall I give you a bill ? ”

“ No, name a day : your word is as good as your bond. How many Anders are there in the army of whom one could say the same ? ”

“ Well,” said the General, going over them on his fingers, “ there are only two generals in the King’s service besides

me : you might say the same of both of them. Then there is another in the Indian service, but he is a lunatic—religious, or something of that sort. Reads the Bible, you know, and prays before he goes into action. Been in India all his life, and had a *coup de soleil*, for aught I know. As for the two men in the King's service, there is Bob ; that is my cousin ; retired—the man the row was about with the organ-grinders — always disputing hackney-coach fares, you know ; fellow with a bumble foot and a cast in his eye. You must have seen him a hundred times at Crooks's."

Reginald had never seen anything of that establishment but the outside, and mentioned the fact.

" True," said the General. " A-ha ! my boy, the play would be too high for you ; I have dropped my thousands there. Well, then there is Doddery Anders—

you know him, of course. Bless me, I was forgetting the old fellow only died last week, and I have never called on him since. The poor fellow will be buried before I have time to leave my card on him. I must really go this very afternoon. Good-bye, Hetherege, and thank you. I will be true to the day, and thank you."

Reginald departed, musing as to which General Anders it was who had done him this especial kindness. It was not his acquaintance, that was certain. It was certainly not the bumble-footed, one-eyed General; that also was certain. It was not Doddery Anders either, because he had been dead a week. Therefore it was evidently the Indian General with the *coup de soleil*.

This seemed the more probable, as it was exactly the sort of thing which a man with a *coup de soleil* would have

done. In fact, it seemed perfectly certain that no one short of a lunatic could have done it. Not that his Indian General was a lunatic—he was a most sensible fellow. No man could have behaved in a more reasonable way than to give him £200 to spend, and keep his son at college, without knowing anything whatever about them. Such things certainly, he argued, were more often done inside Bedlam in intention, than outside Bedlam in practice. Still, there were a great many people called mad who were not mad, and the merchant Digby was a case in point. No, the Indian General was the man, and a most sensible fellow, too.

Yes; the mad General was the man. Yet, what did he mean by talking about an “old debt?” That, doubtless, was part of his innocent delusion. He was evidently the man; and he, Reginald,

was bound in honour to make no enquiries, so he went home peacefully.

His friend General Anders never had a new Army List, from motives of economy, otherwise he would have known that there had been a new General Anders this four years—a man he had known as *Colonel* Anders, and whom he was to know better before he died. This was Reginald's benefactor. Reginald, however, settled on the Indian General, and remembered him in his prayers, as often as he said them, the Indian General never having heard of him in his life at that time, and, after having made his acquaintance, considering him as an objectionable person, entirely without any hopes of happiness in the next world, in consequence of his religious opinions, which were entirely different from those of the General.

One particular effect of the conversa-

tion between Reginald and his quaint, honest friend the General was this: Reginald fixed upon the Indian Colonel as his benefactor, and, retiring into his books, asked no further questions. We hope that when you see the real General, you will not dislike him, or think that he is a lunatic in any way.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HEIR TO THE PROPERTY IS DISCUSSED.

CHARLES, therefore, departed to Cambridge with money in his pocket. The least that Reginald could do was to ask the rector and Monseigneur to meet him at dinner before he started. They came, and everything went off very pleasantly. At half-past ten the two reverend gentlemen were in the hall, putting on their coats and hats. Monseigneur, who was nervous about the night air on his tonsure, had a natty little velvet cap, which fitted under his hat. In putting it on he dropped it, and the rector picked it up and gave it to him.

“Yes,” said the rector, “you create wants, and gain your power by supplying them.”

“How utterly dead your argument falls!” said Monseigneur, promptly. “What power is there in my poor little cap?”

The rector laughed heartily. “Well, I am no match for a Jesuit, and you had me there. I like to exasperate a Romanist, though, on every occasion.”

“Your logic must be a little better before you exasperate me, you good man,” said the priest heartily. “But walk with me, I have something to say to you very particularly.” And so they walked away.

“Will you come to my hotel?” said the priest; “it is close by.”

“I will, with pleasure. I am unhappily a widower, and there is no one to wait up and scold me if I am late.”

“A widower!” said the priest. “Have you any children, rector?”

“Yes; three.”

“That was the unfulfilled dream of my heart. Yet why should I say so, for I have three whom I love most dearly, the sons of my patron. Enough of this—here is our hotel.”

“Did you ever hear of Sir Walter Raleigh?”

“What about him just now?”

“Oh, many things. He lost his head for trying to do one too many. He was a hero; he discovered tobacco, a thing I like.”

“Then we will smoke, if you never tell your bishop. Here are cigars. Now, forget all that I have said, and we will talk of your youth.”

“What do you think of him?” said the rector.

“Well, I have been talking so very

freely to you, that I will continue my confidence. I am glad you have won him; I could never have done anything with him—Heaven send you may."

"You really mean that?" said the rector. "But I see you do. I join in your prayer, and perfectly agree with you. He is a difficult subject. Now we are so comfortable together, will you tell me, as one English gentleman to another, what *do* you think of him?"

"I will, most heartily," said Monseigneur. "He is not to be trusted."

"Quite so," said the rector. "I have no doubt that his Cambridge tradesmen will be of the same opinion three years hence."

"I don't mean in monetary matters—I mean morally."

"Yes."

"He has undergone, in consequence of

his late lamentable catastrophe, what you heretics would call——”

“I am not a heretic,” said the rector ; “the arch heretics are those of the Romish Church.”

“ You Protestants then——”

“I am not a Protestant, save always against the heretics of Rome. I am an Anglican.”

“ You Anglicans then—he has undergone a very rapid conversion, I should say too rapid a one ; and I hope it may be as lasting. I don’t think that it will myself. There is a large spice of the old Adam in him yet, and it gets more obvious day by day, as he gets well. He is cursed with a genius or devil ; and it shows itself in the rapid assimilation of knowledge, and incalculable speech about that knowledge immediately afterwards, without thought. He has immense powers of speech and argument,

and I see nothing to prevent his becoming quite as shallow-pated a charlatan as the great——”

“He might do worse than that,” said the rector.

“I think not,” said Monseigneur. “But to go on. When you get under the outside crust of the boy, you find little except selfishness. At first, when he was fairly frightened, he ran to me; and I think you will say that I behaved well then.”

“Most nobly.”

“He, in his first religious exaltation, told me everything—how he had been tempted to murder his father among other things. He will say nothing of them now. Have you noticed anything of the same kind?”

“Yes,” said the rector. “While he was being shaken over the bottomless pit he seemed different to what he is now. But remember his youth, remember his

life, remember his previous opinions, and hope for the best."

"I do," said Monseigneur, "but I cannot disguise from myself that I am glad that you are answerable for his soul—not I."

"Nay, nay, my good friend; I am not answerable for his soul. I think the lad has warm affections, and is capable of much good, and not a little evil. As for talking about the character of a boy like this, you might as well talk about a block of marble as a statue before Praxiteles got hold of it. Of course you are sore that you did not get him, but be fair on him. He will enter the Church as a matter of course now, and he will be a splendid preacher. I wish *I* had his way of putting things. To more worldly matters: the thing which will ruin a lad like him, is the expectation of money."

“Then this story about the will *is* true ?”

“I suppose so. What do you know ?”

“Come,” said Monseigneur, laughing, “you are rather too frank, my friend. Tell me what you know first.”

“Very little. Old Digby, in the last century, left his property to the devil, to prevent it falling into the hands of the Romish Church. Ever since which the Romish Church has been negotiating with the devil for it, hitherto unsuccessfully.”

“That is very funny, Mr. Rector,” said Monseigneur ; “but, unfortunately, it is not true ; and, saving your presence, you commit a piece of bad manners in making the joke.”

“I beg a thousand pardons,” said the rector ; “you correct me most righteously. I really know very little about the matter—forgive my poor joke.”

“Forgiven at once. As for knowing anything about the matter, very few do. There are an innumerable number of claimants under this will, and at the death of our friend Reginald there will be an immense sum of money to divide. I have heard it said, on Jesuits’ authority, that Charles Hetherege will take two millions of money.”

“Two millions? That is impossible!”

“Well, I think not. Charles believes that he will come into a larger sum at his father’s death, and that will make him very careless.”

“But if there was any truth in this the Jews would advance him money.”

“General Anders asked that question; not of the *Jews*, but of people who stand higher. The answer was that Reginald’s life was as good as Charles’s, if not better; that if Charles died without issue they were nowhere; and that if Reginald

were to die out of the way, the Chancery suit might go on for another twenty years before any one touched one penny."

"General Anders got that opinion, did he?" said the rector; "and who is General Anders, and what earthly business is it of his?"

Monseigneur had said a little more than he meant. "You see, my dear rector, the boy believes he will have money, and that will do him all the harm in the world. Let us hope for the best."

"But who, in the name of all confusion, is General Anders?" asked the rector.

"Bless me!" said Monseigneur, "it is half-past one, and they have turned the gas off. Let me light you down. Mind that step; now there are three. Oh, there is the hall porter. Good-night, and good-bye; I am off to Henley to-morrow."

Naval and Military Intelligence. —

General Arthur Anders, C.B., sailed yesterday for the Cape, in H. M. S. *Blonde*. In military circles his mission is considered important. From the Cape the gallant General will proceed in the *Blonde* to Aden, at the mouth of the Red Sea, and Perim, an island in the neighbourhood. The *Blonde* will then pass up the Red Sea to Suez; at which point, it is understood, the gallant General will disembark and proceed to Acre.

That was Reginald's General Anders, and it will be a long time before we meet.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECOND STATE OF THAT MAN.

CHARLES returned dutifully to Cambridge, and no one knew anything at all about his affairs. He was received very well by all the dons, and only a few of the undergraduates had heard that there was a strange story about him.

What that story was exactly the undergraduates themselves could not make out. In fault of knowing anything about him, they invented several different stories. All these inventions tended one way—that he had had a desperate *affair de cœur*, and that did him no harm at all.

He worked very hard in a college

where he need not have worked, and then, *per contra*, he lived very expensively in a college where he might have lived cheaply. He was extremely religious in his way, and yet he and his friend, the rector, had a few words now and then about sumptuary extravagance.

“Charles,” the rector would say, “you are not keeping your first promise.”

“As how?”

“You are so extravagant.”

“I can pay.”

“I doubt that,” said the rector.

“What did that ring cost?”

“£125,” said Charles.

“Is it paid for?”

“No; but it will be.”

“At your father’s death?”

“No; I can raise money.”

“A hundred thousand times I tell you that you cannot. Don’t be a perfect fool!”

“I do not think that I am.”

“There is nothing to prevent your being a beggar at present. In case of your father’s dying, you may have to wait twenty years for a sixpence. And are you moral? You went to Eton on charity—your father could never have afforded to send you there; and even now the money you spend on luxuries is out of your father’s pocket. Such is gratuitous education.”

Charles always turned the matter off at these points. There was money coming somehow, and so he did not very much care. His perfectly blameless life, and his hard and successful work, told well for him; still, the Provost and tutors lamented over a singular and remarkable extravagance on his part.

His old Atheistic theories were sent to the wind now. A certain division began at that time in the Church, and Charles

took his side with the rector in the strongest manner. He was utterly indiscreet in his partisanship. Certain good men required a subscription for certain purposes, and had a sermon for the furtherance of their cause. Charles dropped his diamond ring into the plate (having no cash), which was not paid for, and which was politely returned.

He got a great deal of credit, both in Cambridge and in London. He was a ward in Chancery, and although cash was scarce—none, in fact, being obtainable in spite of all his efforts—yet credit was abundant. The only cash he had was that which he had from his father, which, as we know, came through General Anders.

When he entered holy orders he had these things in hand. He was third wrangler, and second in classics. He had a fellowship of £250 a year; and he

owed £2500. The fact that he had been quietly married, three months before he came into his fellowship, to a young orphan governess without a prospect, was a matter unknown, at first, to the world.

But so it was. There was no earthly reason for his getting married in that private way. Before he committed this crowning act of folly, he had made himself a name which would have pulled any woman through. He would have had to forfeit his fellowship, but he could have put a bold face on the world. To save the £250 a year he forfeited his own honour, and dragged his wife's name through the dirt. He took his ordination vow with a lie in his mouth. He alienated every old friend from him except his father. Poor Mrs. Charles, in her anxiety about her firstborn, went to the rector and told him the truth.

The rector refused to keep the secret,

and Charles was forced to acknowledge his wife and resign his fellowship. He had entirely ruined himself, and the family were the first to acknowledge the fact. They had certainly never done much for him, but now they openly discarded him. Until Reginald's death he was nobody, and Reginald's quiet, temperate habits were likely to keep him alive for forty years.

Five years of alternate success and disaster followed. Charles took to tutorship and preaching, and made a small success at the first, and a very great success at the second. He might have preached himself into a good living had he been left alone; but, in this wicked world, people who have money owing to them like to see it paid. His fellowship was gone, and nobody after that seemed to believe in his inheritance; at all events the Jews did not, and so Charles

could get no money, not even at sixty per cent.

His creditors closed on him. Mrs. Charles exerted herself as far as she could, but, with all her fine words, she could not butter the parsnips. Cox and Greenwood wrote to Reginald to mention the fact that General Anders declined, for the present, to assist the Hetheredges any further.

Reginald was not entirely broken-hearted by this. He had his £250 a year, and Charles got half the same sum for each pupil. There were no children alive, for the first two had died in infancy. It was when George was first born that the crash came.

Reginald had done all he could. His salary, such as was left of it, was secure for his lifetime, and he raised money on it to help his son Charles with his most furious creditors. By this act he

made himself a beggar, and he had to go and live with his son Charles, eking out their income with his literary work. A garret was good enough for him, so long as he could keep the roof of it over Charles's head.

Reginald, Charles, and Mary really worked like horses to keep the house from ruin, but it was an extremely difficult thing to do. At the time when the first of his infants which lived, George, was born, Charles had but one pupil—George Barnett, its godfather, only son of the great county baronet, Sir Lipscombe Barnett, of Somersetshire. From Sir Lipscombe Charles could often get an advance, though that awful personage had but little idea of the real state of Charles's affairs. Reginald also got plenty to do from the publishers, and was very well paid; but he, with the time consumed at his office, had not sufficient leisure

to do any vast amount of his extremely careful and refined work. Charles actually advertised writing sermons, and got a good many; but it did not pay. He advertised for a religious lady in a clergyman's family, but he never got one. He then advertised for an imbecile or aged lady requiring the comforts of a home; and lastly, for a lady of intemperate habits, desiring to be cured; but in everything he failed. He at that time had a small church, with almost nominal duties, and an almost nominal income, which gave him abundance of time to use his talents for preaching nearly every Sunday; but it went very little way. It was perfectly obvious that a break-down must come, sooner or later, and it came sooner instead of later.

For three years Charles had taken the summer duty of Arcis-sur-Mer, by which

he got a holiday free of expense. This particular year he arrived at that watering-place before his congregation had come, or before the gravel was laid down at the *établissement*. So small a number had he of English permanent residents, that he considered it scarcely worth while to disturb the Huguenot minister, and held his services in the apartments of General Talbot, a distant relation, who acted as his churchwarden. London had got far too hot for him, and he had fled, leaving his father, his wife, his infant son, and his pupil to take the best care of themselves they could with an execution in the house. Three of the four considered his retreat as one of the most masterly things ever done, and, never thinking of themselves, rejoiced in his safety ; for Charles was one of those men who somehow got all their women folks, and many of

their friends, to take them at their own valuation. Young George Barnett (who, like almost every one else, succeeded afterwards in getting Reginald into trouble) considered his tutor as a model man, with perhaps a few of the eccentricities always to be found with great genius, and assisted at Charles's departure for Arcis with great shrewdness and devotion, forgetting, in the hurry of affairs which immediately followed it, to mention the matter to his father. How long he would have continued this very culpable omission, we cannot say —possibly until Reginald had written himself; but the great Sir Lipscombe became acquainted with the state of things with his own horrified eyes.

Sir Lipscombe Barnett, on looking over his banking-book, discovered that Charles had drawn two quarters in advance, and was, at the same time, rather surprised

that he had heard nothing very lately from his son and heir. The most anxiously indulgent of fathers, he at once determined to go to town and make inquiries of his son's welfare. He put on his buff waistcoat and trousers, his blue coat and brass buttons, and came to town, determining to hear a debate or so on the Reform Bill, then in the moment of projection in the House of Commons, before he went down.

On alighting at the garden gate before Charles's house, he was surprised to see an abnormal quantity of straw and paper, not only in the garden, but scattered all about the road, evidently having connection with the reverend gentleman's house, for it lay thicker at his door than it did anywhere else. On knocking, he was at once admitted by a greyish, military-looking man, who drew himself

up and saluted his old officer, and to whom Sir Lipscombe said, “What are you doing here, Malony? Have you left the army?”

“Yes, your honour; I have served my time, and I am engaged by Mr. Richards, the auctioneer. I am watching the few things which have not been sold, your honour.”

“Sold! Has there been a sale here?”

“Surely. His riverence is sold up entirely.”

“And where is he?”

“Divvle a body knows,” said Malony; “you surely wouldn’t have him here. Mayhap he’s been trated so bad in this country, that he’s gone abroad to convert the haythen.”

“Where are the others?”

“Upstairs, in the top of the house, wid the baby. There is the scholar there that his riverence was teaching all the elegant diversions. I never——”

“Good heavens! my son!” said Sir Lipscombe, giving five shillings to the old soldier, and walking up.

Why had not his son fled to his aunt’s—anywhere? What a scene for him!

Sir Lipscombe went up the bare staircase, looking into the empty rooms—so cheerless, even on the bright April day. How hollow and loud everything sounded! What echoes came to answer the intruding footfalls, as if the ghosts of all the people who had lived and died there before, were come to see how the last tenants had treated their old haunts, and in what state they had left them. The voices of some people talking upstairs sounded very out of place and loud, and when some one burst into a roar of laughter above, it sounded strangely—the more so as, in the laugh, Sir Lipscombe recognized the voice of his son and heir. It was a very catching laugh, however,

and he joined in it himself, though in a more subdued tone.

Peeping into a top front-room, he saw the family group encamped there. Reginald was at a table, writing ; on one side of the fireplace was Mrs. Charles, with an infant, and in front of the fire was his son and heir, actually helping to cook the dinner, under Mrs. Hetherege's instructions. It was the laughter at this humorous arrangement which the worthy baronet had heard when he was coming upstairs.

He ought to have been very angry, but he was so very sorry for the Hethereges that his anger was changed to pity. Moreover, the chief culprit was absent, taking his usual course of leaving others to bear the brunt, and so there practically was no one to be angry with, except his son—and it was very hard to say what *he* had done. Besides, Sir Lips-

combe was one of those soft-hearted men who can't stand the sight of a woman and child in distress, and that poor, pale, pretty, defenceless Mrs. Charles Hetherege with her baby, sitting amidst the poor remains of her furniture in her dismantled nursery, made the kind widower's heart full in thinking of days gone by for him for ever. He advanced quickly, saying,—

“ Mr. Hetherege, my dear sir, you have been unfriendly in not writing to me ; my good sir, pray tell me all about it at once. My dear madam, pray do not rise, I beg of you. Really, I am angry with you too ; surely I am a sufficiently old friend to be trusted. Come, I must scold you. George, my dear, how do you do ? ”

“ I was waiting for instructions from Charles before I could do anything, Sir Lipscombe,” said the poor lady.

“ Surely, surely—quite right,” said Sir Lipscombe. “ My dear Mr. Hetherege, I wish for a word or two with you down-stairs,” and so they went into an empty room.

“ Dear, dear ! ” said Sir Lipscombe, “ I suppose when things have come to the worst that they must mend, Mr. Hetherege.”

“ They have not come to the worst, my dear sir,” said Reginald.

“ Can that be ? ”

“ We have a roof over our heads to-day, to-morrow we shall have none. She is rapidly sickening, and her life and the child’s will be in danger unless I can nourish and house her better—and that baby the heir to millions ! ”

“ Well, well ! he must anticipate some of his property. I will lend the child a hundred pounds, and put it into your hands, to do as you please with ; but the

wife and child must be permanently provided for by a member of the family.”

“Ah!” said Reginald, with a great laugh, “but by which?”

“Is there more than one, that you could hesitate? Get that mother and child once inside Miss Hester Simpson’s house, and I will be sworn that she will not go out again in a hurry. Don’t you see what I mean?”

“I do—but I tremble.”

“Tremble at what? You are the only one of the family who was never afraid of her. She can’t eat you.”

“But she hates Charles so.”

“Bad taste on her part. When she knows what a perfect charming little jewel his wife is, she won’t hate her.”

“But I have given her such desperate offence; I have abused her novels so.”

“The last woman in the world to

resent that ; you know she has never been different to you on that score.”

“ That is true ; but how am I to manage it ? ”

“ You do right to ask an old soldier. I will tell you how. Knock at the door when she is at home ; go in,—for you are never refused,—show the mother and child into the dining-room, and go coolly upstairs and take the bull by the horns. Is Goodge in town ? ”

“ No.”

“ Confound that fellow ! he never is when he is wanted. Still I would only have used him after I had failed, were I in your place. You must do without him.”

“ It is a wild plan.”

“ It is a perfectly certain one. Another thing, has she or any other member of the family been apprised of this child’s birth ? ”

“No.”

“That was extremely foolish, and the sooner it is known the better; you will see that for yourself if you think it out.”

“Sir Lipscombe,” said Reginald, “I am profoundly in your debt, and the thing shall be done, or risked. The deuce is in it if I don’t succeed in such a good cause; but I wish Goodge was here.”

“Well, I will make my adieux upstairs, and take the boy home. Let me know at once of your success or ill-success. I will write that little document upstairs, in case of failure.”

From the parting scene between young George Barnett and Mrs. Hetheredge and Reginald, few would have guessed that the boy was leaving a squalid, uncomfortable house, to go to every pleasure of a country house and

the arms of an over-indulgent father. The boy cried heartily, and was so very sorry, that even the pleasures of the town, to which his father had resort to calm him, were only partially successful. Years after, when Sir Lipscombe joined in the great quarrel against Reginald, two parties, at all events, remembered his great kindness. But we must bid good-bye to him and to his son for a very long time, and follow Reginald while he unfolded to Mary part of his desperate project.

Terrified as poor Mary was, for the child's sake she consented to go and see the terrible Miss Simpson. And so those two babes in the wood started together, taking the unconscious baby George.

CHAPTER X.

THE OGRESS'S CASTLE IS STORMED.

ALTHOUGH Reginald was very anxious to follow the suggestion of Sir Lipscombe, and get Mrs. Charles and the baby into Aunt Hester's house, he knew perfectly well that it would require all his audacity and courage to do it. "Once in," he said to himself, "the old girl" (so disrespectfully did he speak of that great genius) "dare not turn her out, for shame's sake; and Charles's wife is a woman who will win her way to any one's heart, leave alone that of a sentimental old woman."

Aunt Hester was so far from being considered in any way sentimental by

the family, that they trembled when they mentioned Fitzroy Square—the square which was honoured by the residence of that great authoress. The younger and more audacious of the Talbots, Murdochs, and Simpsons used flatly to refuse to go and see her on some occasions. She was extremely wealthy, having been left an heiress by a partial failure of the Simpson's main branch. Whether she would take anything under the great will was not very clear, but she always said she would stand by her rights, if they were only fifty pounds. If the will was set aside to-morrow, however, she would have a fine penny to leave; and so, with the more thoughtful of the family—though most of them were very well off—she was considered as most eccentric relations are considered who have £3000 a year and spend one, with the power of leaving it where they choose; that is to

say, as a relation not to be lost sight of. Her money, if one of the Talbot or Murdoch girls were to have it, might bring a peerage into the family—a thing which General Talbot, of Arcis-sur-Mer, always prayed against.

From the conduct of Aunt Hester to her relations, however, the chances seemed very strong that the family would never be blessed with a peerage, unless they could get it with their own money. She seemed to entertain an objection to her relations quite as strong as that of the great Digby himself. She had made one exception, and that exception was so utterly hopeless a one, that she was apparently confirmed in considering her relations as her natural enemies.

She had loved one of them, and there were dark rumours afloat about the strange old woman, to the effect that she loved him still. James Murdoch had

been a handsome, clever, bright lad when she took him up, sent him to school, where he did badly, and to college, where he did worse. He treated her with the most utter ingratitude. Some said—that is to say, her own servants said—that he robbed her, and got money by threats from her. She was not a young woman when she saw his evil boy's face, but even now, when she was getting old, it was noticed that this spendthrift and blackleg was never without money, and held his own somehow. The family's theory about him was that he knew something about her, and traded on it. Reginald, more shrewd in his way, saw the truth; never having had a child of her own, she had loved and adopted this one, and though her heart was half broken by disowning him, she would not cast him entirely away. Perhaps that is why Reginald felt some confidence in his

designs on this old woman now over fifty, whom he called a fool at one time, and a sentimental old woman at another.

“I wish,” Reginald had often said to himself, “that she could have taken a fancy to my Charles, instead of to that fox-eyed young vagabond, James Murdoch.”

But she never could, and Charles had always remained her pet abomination. These reflections forced themselves on Reginald’s mind now, when he was going to thrust Charles’s wife (whom Aunt Hester had never recognized) into Aunt Hester’s house.

Aunt Hester had heard something of Charles’s escapades, and from that day forbade any of her relations to mention his name in her house. Miss Rose Talbot, hearing of this restriction, called on Aunt Hester at once, though she had not been near her for a year,

and persistently talked of no one but Charles. Aunt Hester was perfectly civil to her, and the day she was married to George Talbot, her cousin, sent her a splendid jewel, on which was engraved, "For her who spoke well, at all risks, for her unworthy cousin." That circumstance, among others, illustrative of the softer side of Aunt Hester's character, naturally came into Reginald's mind this day.

The society of Aunt Hester, like that of many great geniuses, could not be enjoyed without the persons enjoying it becoming aware of certain trifling matters of manner different from those usual among the mere herd. Aunt Hester, for example, used to say exactly what she thought, which was tolerably dreadful; but then, she would consider it necessary to say nothing at all sometimes during a whole visit, but sit looking at her visitor

with a strong gaze from behind spectacles. She was also reported to have resorted to personal violence on more than one occasion, but of this there was not the slightest proof. Goodge certainly never denied it when he was asked about it, but became silent, and left her younger relations to infer what they chose; and they chose to infer that, on the whole, they had better leave Aunt Hester alone, which was probably what he wanted.

She tolerated from Reginald a great deal more than she would from any one else. Reginald was a poor courtier, and had actually done her considerable injury. He thought some of her novels nonsense, and he wrote reviews of them saying so. She was no less friendly to him after this than before; and although she never helped him openly, yet Reginald had some assistance from certain

quarters which he was often inclined to put down to Aunt Hester.

Aunt Hester still continued to dress in the fashions of 1815, which rendered walking exercise highly inconvenient for her, in consequence of the boys. She therefore confined herself to carriage exercise, and drove in her carriage round the park at regular hours in the season. Reginald calculated on those hours very carefully, and intended to arrive with his perfectly submissive companion during her absence. On arriving at her door, he was informed that she was at home, whereupon he said audibly to the butler,

“ Confound it ! I’ll see her, Jamieson.” He indeed saw nothing for it now but to follow Sir Lipscombe’s plan of the campaign. “ Just wait while I help this lady in.”

Jamieson showed the way into the dining-room, where the poor trembling

lady sat down with the baby, and then took Reginald upstairs, announcing him.

Hester Simpson was sitting at a little table, writing. She rose.

A tall, hawk-nosed woman, with a pair of keen grey eyes, and heavy eyebrows. Her grizzled hair was nearly as short as some boys, with only a few little curls in front. She was a woman of fine presence, with a well-formed figure. Her drapery was very scanty, though long, and her waistband was under her armpits. She swept a most beautiful curtsy, and said,—

“ To what have I the honour——? ” when Reginald interrupted her.

“ Now, don’t get in a tantrum, my good Hester, but be a reasonable woman ; you and I can be friendly enough if we like. I am in trouble, and I want your help—I must have it.”

Aunt Hester sat down, put on her spectacles, took her cheque-book from

her desk, dropped the pen in the ink, and said, sepulchrally—

“ How much ? ”

“ I don’t *want* any money, I tell you,” said Reginald.

Aunt Hester shut up her cheque-book, put it back in her desk, wiped her pen, took off her spectacles and put them in their case, and then sat utterly silent, waiting for instructions.

“ I tell you I don’t want any money, Hester.”

Aunt Hester pointed to the last arrangement which she had made in her writing-table, elevated her eyebrows, waved her hands, and then folded them. Still she was utterly silent.

“ Confound it, Hester, won’t you speak to me ? ”

“ I was waiting for you to speak.”

“ Well, then, I will. Charles is sold up, and is gone to his old quarters

at Arcis-sur-Mer. His wife has had another baby born—a son and heir to a bedstead, a couple of chairs, and a million or so of money, and I have brought her here to be under your protection for the present, as she is far too ill to be moved about. You cannot, as a Christian woman, turn her out of your house, and she is downstairs in the dining-room now, with her baby."

Aunt Hester suddenly arose and fell upon Reginald. She seized him by one breast of his coat with her left hand, while with her right she pummelled him soundly, until the dust flew out of his old unbrushed coat in clouds.

"Oh, you villain, you villain, you villain!" she said when she was tired, and paused for breath.

"Are you better, Hester?" he asked quietly.

She immediately flew at him again, and pulled his right ear violently.

“ You are a villain ! ” she said when she sank down in her chair. “ You have plotted that the child shall be brought into my house, and that it shall be under my protection. As for your worthless son’s wife, she shall stay here to-night, but I shall provide for her elsewhere in the morning. The hospital is the best place for her, but I will see to her for to-night—and to-night only, mind. You write to your precious son by this post, and tell him that. Tell him that he may make his mind assured of that. You leave my house instantly, Reginald. I never thought or spoke ill of you, and you have served me this cruel trick. It is unworthy of you, Reginald. I am a lonely old woman, and every one plots against me ; *tu quoque*—the man I did trust before every one except Goodge. Go away, and tell your son that nothing shall harm his wife ; but that out of my house she goes.”

“ You will be kind to her to-night, at all events, Hester,” said Reginald.

“ Am I a savage ? ” said Hester Simpson.

“ May I tell her so ? ”

“ That I am a savage—certainly.”

“ No, don’t be silly. That you will be kind to her.”

“ You had just better march out of this house and mind your own business until to-morrow morning,” said Hester.

And Reginald, quite agreeing with her, departed hurriedly, past an astonished butler, leaving Aunt Hester a terrible figure on the lower stairs.

“ Where is Mrs. Prodit ? ” said Aunt Hester in a lofty voice. Mrs. Prodit was the housekeeper, and was at once fetched.

“ Mrs. Prodit,” said Aunt Hester to the housekeeper, butler, and also the footman, who had joined from a laudable

curiosity, and was detected putting his coat on before he had shut the staircase door. The servants were all attention.

“ In all well regulated houses it is considered customary for servants to dress themselves in their offices, and not in the hall.”

This awful allusion to James disconcerted the party, and made James’s face the colour of his plush breeches.

“ Mrs. Prodit.”

“ Yes, madam.”

“ I am expecting a baby and its mother—”

“ La ! ” said Mrs. Prodit.

“ And its young mother, to stay in the house for a considerable time,” continued Hester sternly.

“ Pretty dear ! ” said Mrs. Prodit, not exactly knowing what to say in her astonishment.

“ I do not know whether she is pretty

or ugly, Prodit ; I suppose she is handsome, for these fools always do marry pretty girls. But I am not pretty, Prodit, and you are for a woman of your age ; you women without any brains always keep your looks. It is the same with the men. If Jamieson there had not been originally ugly, he would have kept his looks till he was seventy.” (Jamieson was very handsome, like every one who was allowed near Hester.) “ You, Prodit, take your doll’s face into the dining-room, and tell the lady that Miss Simpson will have the pleasure of waiting on her directly ; then come out at once. Jamieson, tell the coachman to slip round to the mews, and have the street laid down in straw at once—instantly. You also tie up the door-knocker with a white kid glove, and, if any one calls—*any* one, mind—and asks how I am, say I am as well as can be expected. If you say one word more,

old services shall count for nothing, and you leave my house."

"I beg your pardon, madam, a thousand times," said Jamieson, "but if Mr. Goodge were to come?"

"Of course, send him up directly. I forgot him—thanks, Jamieson, for reminding me. But I fear that there is no such luck to be looked for as his advice just now."

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEW HOME.

ALAS ! poor, fluttering, trembling deserted Mary, where was she all the twenty minutes ?

In the cold, cruel, inexorable dining-room of a power which she knew to be hostile, and which she feared to be inexorably so. "A mad doctor with a paying connection ought to furnish his rooms with dark mahogany, horsehair, and mirrors in black frames. He would never lose a patient as long as life lasted," thought Mary ; "I should soon go mad in this room."

Here she made a low curtsy, and flushed up with a trembling at her heart.

It was herself, or rather her shadow, to whom she was bowing, shown in one of the looking-glasses. She lay down on one of the cold, black horsehair couches, and began to cry, and also to think. All this time little George was behaving as good as gold, as he continued to do during all which ensued. Let us pay him a compliment which we can rarely pay to babies or schoolboys ; he was so little of a nuisance that we need not mention him any more at present, and only do so now to show that we have not forgotten his existence.

What an insane folly, she thought, she had committed in allowing Reginald to bring her here ! and yet she had never known Reginald's judgment go wrong. She knew, poor lady, that she was utterly beyond thinking for or helping herself, and so she must trust utterly to him. She could not understand, and had given

up trying, for she knew from previous experience that she was beyond the regions of clear judgment. She would have given half her life to have had Charles with her now—her own gallant, brave, tender husband—who in their worst straits had given her the kindest words, and made fun of all their troubles. Poor boy, he could not be here—he would be in prison if he stayed in England. Reginald would not leave her—no, he would never leave her without assistance, in the hands of this terrible old woman.

She heard the front door shut, and looked out of the window. Reginald was crossing the square slowly, evidently in no great hurry to come back again. Then she felt alone and utterly deserted, and a dead sickness, which she knew too well, came over her.

Some one was in the room, who said—

“ Miss Simpson, madam, desires me to say that she will see you directly.”

“I wish to be taken to a hospital,” said Mary, and, getting back to the sofa, sank heavily upon it, and became almost unconscious.

The door was opened again, and the terrible Hester Simpson, previously described, as far as our feeble art would allow us (she was infinitely more awful in reality), approached her. Mary knew it must be Aunt Hester, and feebly recurred to the request about the hospital.

“Why, my pretty one,” said Aunt Hester, kneeling beside her, “you are *in* the hospital. You are in my house, and you are going to stay in it until you are fit to go back to your husband.”

“Where is Reginald, madam? Let Reginald write and tell him that.”

“Good, to think of Charles first,” said Aunt Hester; “but the fact is, that I have packed Master Reginald out of the house with a flea in his ear. He is not

going to play the fool with me, so *I* tell him. Now, first and foremost, what do you fancy? Are you hungry?"

"No, madam; but——"

"She wants champagne and water—that is what *she* wants," said Hester, ringing the bell violently; "that will bring back her appetite. Bring some champagne here, some of you, or am I to be eaten out of house and home by idle servants?"

The champagne and water came, and it refreshed Mary so much, that she submissively mounted two flights of stairs; and after several efforts to thank Hester Simpson, which, like all other conversation, were nipped in the bud, she found herself in a most luxurious bed, in a handsome room, with waving plane trees outside the window. As she sank back among the fresh smelling sheets, she said hazily, by way of saying something,—

“ You don’t take long to air sheets, Miss Simpson.”

“ My dear,” said Hester Simpson, “ we always keep them aired for Mr. Goodge. You never know when he is coming. He might be here to-night, or he might not be here for three weeks. There are another pair airing for him now.”

“ I hope I haven’t incommoded——” began Mary.

“ What, Goodge ? Bless you ! no ; he would as soon sleep in the sink as anywhere ; and, in my belief, would, if he wasn’t seen to bed like a Christian. General Anders says he would pull down a tatty and sleep in that if he could get nothing better. Does that noise annoy you, dear ? ”

“ No, Miss Simpson.”

“ It does me. It’s his cockatoo, and if it belonged to any one else I would make the page wring its neck. But what I say

is, when you get a real profound man of science like Goodge, you must allow for his peculiarities. Goodge's peculiarities show him to be the man of genius that he is. I said to him myself, 'Goodge, you are a fool to go to Tacks-hend.' He replied to me, 'Hester, it is you that are the fool. Come also.' 'As what?' I said. 'As my wife,' said he. But I did not see my way to it at fifty, and he not thirty-five, though he looks sixty. Well, now, my dear, a bit of this chicken, a little more champagne, and then to sleep. Reginald will be here in the morning."

"I should like to talk a little to you, Miss Simpson," said Mary.

"Well, do, my dear, if it does not tire you."

"I am sure my darling Charles is very sorry for all that has happened."

"So he ought to—I mean, no doubt

he is, dear. An affectionate husband, I suppose?"

"The kindest, best of men."

"With the best of wives," said Aunt Hester cheerily.

"I have done my best since the troubles came upon us. But I was only used to poverty, you know, and it came easy to me. Any home would be a heaven to me with him."

"Well, everything will come right, I dare say. I am not going to give him money, because I might just as well put it into a watering-pot and water the flowers with it. But I'll mayhap do so some day or another; and I'll consult Goodge. Come, I can't say anything more than that."

Hester Simpson considered this tantamount to saying that she would behave in the handsomest way. Poor Mary was obliged to be content.

Reginald repaired to a coffee-shop, from which he wrote a succinct account of the day's proceedings, winding up by saying that, if Aunt Hester did not relent in the morning, he should make an effort to bring Mary and the child over to Arcis-sur-Mer. "The poor girl has been pining for you, my own boy, and I should be glad to bring you together. I can get leave from the office, and I have over £120. Expect us when you see us."

CHAPTER XII.

CHARLES MAKES A FAILURE IN HIS SERMON.

“GIVE them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.”—Psalm xxviii. 4.

Such was the text given out by the Rev. Charles Hetherege to the congregation of Arcis-sur-Mer in General Talbot’s drawing-room. The *habitués* of the pretty little church in the Rue des Chênes at once settled themselves comfortably to listen to a good thing—much

as in a theatre one settles one's self comfortably when the curtain goes up on a favourite, well-known piece, with a few of our best liked actors in it. A good thing seldom fails—men never get tired over *Hamlet* or *Twelfth Night*—the congregation knew from the text that they were going to have a denunciatory sermon from the Rev. Charles, against some persons unknown. These sermons used to come nearly every Sunday in the season, and no man could preach them better than the handsome temporary chaplain of Arcis-sur-Mer.

Among the permanent English residents, and among those of the visitors who stayed long enough to become initiated into the ways of the place, there were many theories as to the people who had so greatly aroused the Rev. Charles's anger; for—although they might be the Assyrians one day, the

Canaanites another, the Babylonians a third—it was perfectly clear, obvious, and evident that no man, not even such a genius as the Rev. Charles, could get into such a state of white heat against people who had been dead many thousand years, and who had never done him any wrong. It was certain that he had his enemies in the flesh, and that he used his pulpit, like some others of his reverend brethren, to ease his mind without the remotest chance of contradiction.

The young men of the small Easter vacation reading party were unanimously of opinion that the denounced ones were his University creditors, and that, as he could not pay them in cash, he took this rather peculiar method of paying them in kind. Their tutor, however, who had been a contemporary of the Rev. Charles, was of another opinion—

it was evidently, from his point of view, the *London* creditors who were denounced. He was accustomed, in fact, to use the Rev. Charles Hetherege as an example, to illustrate some of those invaluable pieces of worldly wisdom with which, in more confidential moments with his pupils, he varied conic sections and Juvenal.

“See,” he would say, “what a fool a man makes of himself by getting in debt in London, where people won’t wait, when he may have any amount of tick at his University, where people will. Charles Hetherege might owe three times as much as he does, and walk the streets of Cambridge now.”

These invaluable bits of advice were treasured up and acted on duly by his fortunate pupils.

General Talbot, the gentle, wise Indian officer, who lived here for his health, and

who was the richest of all Charles's congregation, knew a great deal more about Charles's enemies than any one else. He was Charles Hetheredge's churchwarden, his guide, and his friend. He knew perfectly well that the Hivites, Hittites, and Perizzites, who were doomed to eternal perdition in such masterly language, were only the people who refused to lend Charles any more money, or who impertinently asked for their own back again. *He* never was denounced from the pulpit. In the first place, he always did lend the money ; in the second place, he never asked for it back again ; and in the third, Charles never came to him as long as he had a franc to pay for his morning's bath in the sea.

General Talbot used to say to himself, “The handsome, scatter-brained genius is honest enough, after all. When he gets the money he will pay it, and I can't

see what is to prevent his getting it. The devil of it is that he can't raise money on his chance."

It was evident, on this particular Sunday (to General Talbot), that there was something rather more wrong than usual with the reverend gentleman's affairs. General Talbot said once that his eloquence in the pulpit was so great that Arcis-sur-Mer would have gone into mourning had any one paid his debts and launched him on his legitimate career as a great popular preacher in England. Talbot said that people stayed at Arcis-sur-Mer on their way to Paris to hear him. The vice and frivolity of the latter city he continually denounced, pointing out, *per contra*, the gentle, pastoral life of Arcis-sur-Mer, of which town his churchwarden, General Talbot, used to say very little.

The English hotel-keepers declared

that he filled the place, and would have died on their own hearthstones for him. If Charles had chosen to borrow money in Arcis-sur-Mer, he could have done it ; but he was a queer fellow, and paid his way, partly with his own money, and partly with other people's. He once owed a tradesman 1000 francs at Arcis, and the tradesman pressed. M. Victor, of the Hotel Royal, came to Charles Hetherege, and offered him the money.

Charles Hetherege said, “ No, M. Victor—you, as a foreigner, have no security, as it seems to me. My English friends will all be paid when I have my own, either by myself or my family. But I cannot answer for any money.”

Was this only to make a better name here than he had at home, or was it from real care ?

Knowing his man, General Talbot was very much puzzled by the sermon. As a general rule his usual sermons were characterized by splendid eloquence, always manly, like the man himself, and never florid. He used to begin with a magnificent text of Scripture, written by the Jews, the first great nation of all time, and translated by the English, the second great nation of all time (as he, owing money to both nations, was perfectly assured). Before you had recovered from his magnificent text, in which you were bound to believe, he at once made a splendid and audacious *petitio principii*, in which you were not bound to believe, but to which you were obliged to submit, because the rules of modern civilization prevent you rising in your pew and telling the clergyman that he is talking nonsense. But when once you had swallowed the *petitio principii*,

the man had you body and bones. He then became faultlessly logical, and if he had proved to you that Jacob wore Abraham's stockings, you would scarcely see the flaw in his *sorites*.

As a general rule, he was more logical in these denunciatory sermons than in any others. It is very easy to get up a case against the world; a man must be a poor fool if he cannot do that. The repentant garotter, who has had the misfortune to hammer an old gentleman's head flat, tells the chaplain that it all came from his mother not having warned him against Sabbath breaking. Any one can make a case against the world, and the Rev. Charles Hetheredge could make a very good one, all said and done. In these sermons he spoke only out of the lips of David, Daniel, Susannah, Mordecai, and other ill-used persons. Everybody knew he meant himself, even when

he got logically furious about the wrongs of Susannah ; but his argument was always good, after the first start. On one occasion, by using an old argument about the divisions of the soul, he proved clearly, and in his best style, that he was three people, and that no one had been ever worse treated than himself since the three holy children.

Everybody, on the day of the sermon we speak of, was rather disappointed at first with it. The Cambridge men, who always watched for his *petitio principii*, found it wanting ; there would be no fun for them at lunch. The ladies were utterly puzzled with him. General Talbot hardly knew what to think of it—his pet, nay, his friend seemed to have lost his head ; he wandered from his text. He was furious enough and angry enough —some one had offended him terribly. Was it his Bishop ? Was it any indi-

vidual creditor? That was hardly possible, because none of his creditors expected any money at present. Was it a French creditor? He had none. There was some deadly offence given, however, and the Rev. Charles seemed very angry about it, though there was a strange light in his eyes which General Talbot could not fathom.

The preacher jumbled matters strangely. Magnificent and awful as his words were, even General Talbot could not follow him. He was putting the words of David, quoted at the head of this chapter, into the mouth of Hagar, when she was turned into the desert by Sara. His burning fury against Sara was something awful to hear. The young men from Cambridge, used to good sermons, looked at one another in amazement; and Mr. Dormer said to his favourite pupil, “I have never heard anything like this.”

All in a moment the preacher, in describing the desert scene, bent down his head and burst into tears; for the first and last time in his public life. He was no whimpering preacher—he despised a man who was capable of tears; yet here he was, with his head down on the velvet cushion, not whimpering, like a beaten hound, but fairly sobbing from his great chest, like a strong man beaten down to the level of a woman by great, overpowering emotion.

“My friends,” he said, when he raised his head, “I beg your pardon for this emotion. I cannot explain it here. My heart is too full of mingled joy and sorrow to explain anything. Stay—some of you who have borne with my petulant ways so long deserve confidence. I have denounced Sara, departing from my text, and putting the words of David in her mouth. Will you forgive me when I tell

you that Sara has sent Hagar into the desert as soon as Ishmael is born, and that there is no one to meet her there but myself?"

CHAPTER XIII.

GOODGE.

REGINALD, having written to Charles, found himself once more in the street, quite unconscious of what he was going to do with himself. He had been so long used to worry, duns, and vexation of all kinds, that he felt like a boy with a holiday. He considered what use he would make of that holiday, for he felt very much inclined to think that Aunt Hester would do no more than put Mary into lodgings, and see after her. However, she had a roof over her head that night, at all events, and he would enjoy himself. Where? Why, where an Englishman naturally goes to—his club.

He belonged to a cheap but very select club at the West End, which was instituted for poor gentlemen mainly, though frequented by many rich ones. His ten pounds entrance fee had been paid long ago, and he had always kept up his subscription. Since the more fantastic of Charles's pecuniary irregularities, he had not cared to go there, for in the latter of the few years we have skipped over so cavalierly, Charles, also a member, had owed money to the waiters, had even owed money for cards, all of which he (Reginald) had paid, but which transactions were not in any way pleasant.

"I'll go, however," he said to himself; "I don't owe anything. I shall meet some one there, and can get a bed at an hotel once in a way." So he turned south-westward, musing.

"Charles has made a fearful mess of it; he will never reinstate himself after

this. Hundreds of men without a tithe of his prospects owe six times as much, but he owes it in such an absurd fashion. And adversity has done him no good. At the time of his great trouble, when those priests fought for him, I thought that there was some stuff in him, and that he would make a spoon, whereas he has only spoilt a horn. He has deteriorated very much—there is a total want of moral energy about him which develops every year. He does not drink, he does not do anything which you could exactly lay hold of; but in some of his moods he would laugh if his house was burnt down. He had a faith at one time, but I would not give much for it now. How he preaches so splendidly now without brandy I don't know, but he is as sober as a judge; and yet, after a fit of apathy, put him in the pulpit, and there is no one like him. It is a puzzling

world. It has treated me very well, however, and so I won't grumble. I never pretended to deserve anything from the world at all: I made one fiasco far greater than any of Charles's, and yet here I am with really all I want. Charles, instead of making one fine and really grand mess, as I did, has made fifty small ones, which in the aggregate do not amount to my one, and he is a beggar and a outcast, while I am in clover. By-the-by, I have £100 of his which I must account for. What the deuce is to become of it? Here is another example of his way of managing matters. If I send it to him, I assist him in defrauding his creditors; if I don't, what has his wife to live on if Aunt Hester were to turn Turk? Charles was born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. I'll pay that washerwoman out of it, though — be hanged if I don't! Good heavens! what

an awful Bedlam that house has been lately ; it is like awaking from an evil dream to get out of it."

He was awakened from his reverie by a smiling face, and he found that he had walked into the coffee-room of his club, and had sat down in his old familiar place. The smiling face was that of the steward.

"It is a pleasure indeed, sir," said he, "to see two such old faces, and yet two such unfrequent ones, on the same day, and in the same hour."

"You mean mine for one, I suppose," said Reginald cheerfully, "and your own in the looking-glass behind me for the other. Though why you call your own an unfrequent one, I don't know, for you must see it pretty often. Perhaps you have arrived at the same conclusion that I have—the older one gets the less one cares to look in the glass. The other face not yours ! whose then ? "

“ Mr. Goodge’s, sir.”

“ Goodge ! ” cried Reginald, “ where is he ? ”

“ In the smoking-room, sir ; just fresh from California — somewhere in the Indies. And ain’t he laying down the law neither ? ”

Reginald asked if he had ordered dinner, and finding that he was alone, told him to order double portions, for that he should dine with Mr. Goodge.

He opened the door of the smoking-room, the first sanctum of that kind instituted at any club in London, and looked in.

Before the fire stood an immensely tall man, narrow shouldered, beardless, and without any colour in his face save a dark brown, evidently got from the sun. His hair was closely cropped, showing the splendid form of his skull. He might be any age from five-and-thirty to sixty :

that grey blue eye, in its quaint expression, might belong to a clever, mischievous schoolboy ; that firmly-set mouth, with the large, almost ugly jaw beneath it, belonged to a man, and no common one. His dress was well cut, but made to show his figure more than the common hideous dress of 1831, when handsome men like Palmerston or Melbourne swathed themselves up in the ghastly garments invented by an unhealthy king. His throat, for instance, was bare and loosely knotted in a blue handkerchief under a turn-down collar ; and that wiry throat was as brown as his face or his long sinewy hands.

Such was Goodge the traveller, as Reginald looked at him. He had only to say “ Robert,” when the giant strode towards him, and raised him from the floor.

“ Here is a welcome for a fellow,” he said, in his usual cheery voice. “ Why,

Reginald, I have got a hundredweight of talk to have with you! You must dine with me."

"I have made that arrangement already," said Reginald. "Welcome home, scalps and all!"

"Scalps, quotha," said Goodge. "Mind your own, you old capitalist, or that curly wig of yours, without a grey hair in it yet, as I see, will hang in a wigwam of the tribe of Murdoch some day. How's *scapegrace*? Over the water, I hear, saving *his* scalp. Well, Wolff says that the Indians are the lost tribes of Israel, but I'll be hanged if I wouldn't face all the Indians in America sooner than their brethren of Cursitor Street. Depend upon it, the lost tribes are not half so bad as those who have taken the trouble to remain with us. Here, however, is dinner. I am going to kick up a row with the committee, because there was

no buffalo hump : it is just in season now. Well," he continued, when they were settled at dinner, "now tell us everything about yourself."

"Charles has not been going on well."

"He never did, did he ?" said Goodge.

"I won't go as far as to say that," said Reginald, "but he is going on worse than ever."

"That must be pretty bad," said Goodge.

"It is," said Reginald ; "there is no moral tone about him at all. He is sold out of house and home, and has left his wife pretty much on my hands. I have a hundred pounds of his, and I don't see what to do with her when that is gone. Meanwhile, she has a boy ; the other two children died at once, I have a presentiment that this one will live."

"Well, we must quarter it on Hester then," said Goodge.

“I have already done so,” said Reginald,—“perspectively, that is. I have got her into Hester’s house. She declares that she will turn her out to-morrow morning.”

“Fiddle-de-dee!” said Goodge. “Don’t trouble your mind about her. Hester would never do that; if she proposed it, I would forbid it. I thought you and Hester were at variance. How did you manage it?”

“The courage of desperation, which gives one impudence.”

“What do you expect from it?”

“I don’t very much know. I had an idea—you will think me a fool—that the child ought to be under her protection, for it has none other.”

“Not a bad notion. With a kind fool of a woman like Hester—a very good notion. What is the mother like?”

“A sensible, sharp, plucky little woman.”

“It is possible, then,” said Goodge, “that the child may not turn out as great a fool as its father. And so the Jews won’t have anything to say to Charles ? ”

“No ; they don’t see their way to it. My life is as good as his.”

“And a precious sight better ! ” said Goodge. “Now, tell me fairly, do you expect that Charles will ever take anything under this will ? ”

“At my death there will be, of course, a settlement of some kind, and a vast deal must come out of the fire.”

“A great deal will come out of the fire,” said Goodge ; “there must be a million, or a dozen, somewhere. With all that the lawyers have taken, there must be twelve millions at least.”

“There is nothing like that—there is nothing approaching to it,” said Reginald. “If it were the case, why have

not my family moved more strongly in the matter? They never cared about the suit at all. And if Charles is to have such a vast sum of money, why have they not helped him more?"

"Because they are all rich, because you are eternally in the way, because your life is better than Charles's, because half a hundred things may happen—there are innumerable reasons why they should let things drift. Charles has lost two children lately, for example. Will this one live? If it dies, what becomes of the whole will?—the devil, to whom the money was originally left, only can tell; the Lord Chancellor could not. Old Thellusson made some wild provision, after scheming out an almost impossible succession, to spite his relation, that his money should go to pay the national debt. Do you think Digby was such a fool as that? *There*

is only one man alive now, who ever knew Digby in the flesh intimately. He knew him as intimately as one human being can know another."

"Of whom do you speak?" said Reginald. "What you say is almost impossible. Any one who was old enough to know Digby as intimately as you say, would now be between eighty and ninety, for he would not have confided his affairs to a man under thirty."

"Never you mind about that," said Goodge. "I am not here to mention the age of this man, of whom I am speaking. I only say that he is one of my most intimate friends. One of them—why, he is the truest and bravest friend I have in the world, and the best comrade in bush or jungle I ever wish to have. We shot tigers together last year—he wanted to show me the sport, and it is poor work. This friend of mine knew

Digby well, and his opinion is that the whole suit, will and all, will blow up together like a burst balloon some day."

"Has he got any reason for thinking so?"

"Apparently not, or none which he would tell, even to me. I have told you more than I ought, Reginald, because things spoken of over pipes in jungle or bush are not supposed to be repeated. I only tell you that I sometimes have a suspicion that the whole lawsuit is a moonshine. The old man made his will to plague his relations; like all spiteful people, he has failed at present. Your grandfather was the only one he cared about and really provided for, and he and his descendants are the only ones who have suffered. My friend does not think that that was the old man's wish."

"Then you think——"

"On the contrary. I only suppose

that the old man did not wish his money to be wasted entirely among lawyers, or to go into unworthy hands. Further than that I say nothing. I say that if you were to die to-morrow I would not give sixpence one way or another, unless something happened."

"And what is that?" asked Reginald.

"Never mind. I don't know, so how can I tell you? I want to say some more to you. You to a certain extent give your life to this son of yours—I know more about you than you have ever told me yourself, from a certain quarter. The boy began very badly; he mended for a while, and did well. He is now, according to your own showing, doing worse and worse every year. Did you do your duty by him, old friend?"

"No; I was a fool with him. I put notions into his head, or, rather, let notions grow there, which I should have

combatted. I let him have his own way too much. But what would you have, Goodge? He—the only friend I have—could I quarrel with him? I am so used to be blamed, that I am hanged if I care for it; but you are right in saying that I did not do my duty by that boy—if I had he would have gone to the devil years ago.”

This view of matters struck Goodge as something new. Never in all his travels had he met with such a singular sentiment; and yet it was, apparently, true.

“I fancy you are right there, Reginald. You are certainly the only confidant he ever made. But I put a case to you. This child just born is a boy, will you allow him to grow up under his father’s influences?”

“I am not his father.”

“But would you use your influence

with Charles to make him put the child under the care of other people, who would provide for him? I do not say separate him from his mother until his education began; I mean, do you think that Charles would to some extent give the child up to other influences?"

"I should say that Charles, the most affectionate fellow in the world, would never stand in his child's light. But the child is very young."

"Well, I can only tell you that the child has more friends than you know of. Could you do nothing with the father to save him from ruin?"

"Yes, if I could pay his debts and give him a chance of contracting fresh ones," said Reginald.

"There is where it is," said Goodge. "You yourself could have what you liked to-morrow: you had it once, and then you gave it all to him. I could get you

money, if you could give your honour that it did not go to your son.”

“ Ah ! but, you see, I can’t,” said Reginald.

“ It is a great pity,” said Goodge that evening to himself, “ that that fellow Charles stands in the way so. Anders would do anything for Reginald if he could get rid of Charles.”

CHAPTER XIV.

AN IMPORTANT FAMILY CONCLAVE.

A MEMBER of the family, more than a week afterwards, coming to call on Aunt Hester, found Fitzroy Square down in straw, and the door knocker done up with a white kid glove. He at once drove round to the other members of the family, and announced that Aunt Hester was dying. An immediate family conclave was ordered, and invitations sent out for the next day, at lunch-time. Jamieson, the butler, had merely done as he was told, and said that the lady was as well as could be expected. He had also added, on his own account, that she

was very weak, and that they were very anxious.

The family assembled solemnly at the house of Alfred Murdoch ; they ate their lunch, and then, instead of separating as usual, began to drink sherry. The ladies not only stopped with the gentlemen, but drank sherry also. Each member primed his or herself pretty liberally before any of them belled the cat. Everybody knew what everybody else had come about, but no one liked to begin. At a funeral the conversation is very often much more about the deceased's property than about deceased. So in the present case, the conversation was led up to by the Mrs. Simpson of that generation asking the Mr. Murdoch of that generation over the table what he thought "Aunt Hester would be worth now."

"Three thousand a year, Jane, and

has never spent £1500, that is my opinion," said Murdoch.

Mrs. Simpson, a fat and viciously ill-tempered woman, whose fat had exasperated her temper, instead of softening it, as it does in most cases, replied,—

"She has paid such sums away for that wicked boy of yours, that I doubt if she has much left."

Mr. Murdoch at once rose, and requested of Mr. Simpson to ask his wife "what the devil she meant by that."

Mr. Simpson who like most men with violent wives was a peaceable person, begged Murdoch to pretermit the question.

"They were not there," he said, "to inquire about the amount of Hester's property, but to see what the state of her health was, and, if it were possible, to find out what testamentary dispositions she had made."

He was proceeding to say that it was a matter in which they were all interested, when Miss Laura Talbot rose and spoke. Her words were very few; she only asked of her Cousin Simpson whether her Cousin Murdoch had ever been in the dock for forgery, and then sat down.

The fact of the matter was that there was a blacker sheep in the Simpson fold than ever there had been in the Murdoch. Things not to be spoken of happen in the best regulated families. James Murdoch was a very great rascal; but George Simpson had come under the clutches of the law for bad spelling—he spelt some one else's name instead of his own; let us hope that such mistakes will become less frequent with the spread of education. Miss Laura Talbot was, like most other young ladies, very fond of James Murdoch, and, although he had treated her rather badly, stood

up for him because, as she had told her sister, Cousin Simpson's manner was enough to exasperate a mouse.

She, however, had rather rudely called her fat Cousin Simpson's attention to the fiasco of her firstborn, and had constructively reminded her of the £5000 bail she had had to pay to get the sweet youth out of the country. It was necessary for Cousin Simpson to say something, or for ever to lose her position as being the worst tongued woman in every branch of the family.

It is always supposed that she would at once have withered the audacious Laura Talbot, and left her in tears. But she never did so—she, like Bazaine, lost her opportunity. She often told her friends afterwards what she was going to say to that young lady, but she never said it. She was interrupted, as many another orator has been, by excited in-

terpellations, delivered without previous notice.

“They did not come there to quarrel,” said one. “Pray,” said another, “let them discuss the matter in hand temperately.” It was unanimously voted that the family was to observe the utmost decorum, and the assembled members of it sat down with wrath in their hearts, to see if they could be civil to one another for the first time in their lives when gathered in conclave: though some times, when divided into groups, they got on very well, and only abused one another behind each other’s backs.

They got on tolerably for a considerable time. The sherry, however, while it made the ladies amiable and even reasonable at first, acted differently on the men, who wanted to smoke.

The drinking even of the best brown East India sherry in the middle of the

day would produce its effect on the temper of a saint. The family hauled Aunt Hester over the coals in the most handsome manner, under the firm impression that she was very ill in bed, and, in fact, bound to a better world. They were all pretty well to do people, and her property was not of very much consequence to any of them ; still it had better be kept in the family. If she had made her will, why she had made it ; anyhow, it would be well to know which way the money was gone—or, better, to see if any member of the family could use his influence with her to make her do her duty to her kindred, a thing in which she had been sadly remiss. At this point (of the sherry), there was not a more united family in Christendom, for each member had a son or daughter which he would have been most glad to marry to his or her cousin, provided extraneous

cash was forthcoming. Aunt Hester's cash was, so to speak, extraneous, and any member of the family would have married his son or daughter for it, though he knew that he gained the undying enmity of the rest of his kindred. It was a free game, like football: some one would have to kick some one else's shins in it, and apologize afterwards. But as no one was in the least degree aware as to whose shins were going to be kicked, or who was going to kick them, there was really no mutual animosity, and the whole matter might perfectly well be looked at quietly under a haze of sherry.

But "Canary" (which one may suppose the sherry of Shakspeare's time) is—says Mrs. Quickly—a very searching wine; and, as the conversation proceeded, the gentlemen of the party began to get snappish and fractious towards one another.

“Has any one heard anything of Cousin Reginald, lately?” said Mr. Murdoch.

“I should not much care if I never heard of him again,” said Mr. Simpson.

“Very likely,” said Mr. Murdoch; “but everybody may not be your way of thinking, you see. I rather like poor Reginald —he is nobody’s enemy but his own.”

“I ask your pardon,” said Mr. Simpson, “he is my enemy, and the enemy of every one in this room.”

“Pray do not enter into an altercation, Mr. Simpson,” said his wife.

“I will not be quiet, I tell you, Jane,” said Mr. Simpson, valiant with the three glasses of wine which he had taken. “I consider that Reginald could be very easily spared out of this world indeed. He has not adorned it so much as to justify him in living over sixty.”

“He is not fifty,” said Mr. Talbot.

Mr. Murdoch knew that he was about

fifty, but as he thought it would annoy Mr. Talbot to contradict him, he did so, and said that Reginald was seventy. Reginald's name being thus brought on the carpet, a rather lively wrangle followed on the subject of the will.

"It would be a rather curious thing, after all, if Charles were to die without children," said Mr. Simpson. "He has lost two, and it is quite possible that he may lose another, or, indeed, not have any more."

"I would not take any more of that wine if I were you, Mr. Simpson," said Mrs. Simpson. "Your last remark was as nearly as possible imbecile."

"Yes," said Mr. Murdoch, "Simpson's last remark was not a very bright one, certainly."

"It was as bright as any you are likely to make, Mr. Murdoch," said the offended lady, who allowed no one to

abuse her husband but herself. “ My husband has not much brains, maybe, but he has as much as some who think themselves wiser. I don’t hold with the way he put what he said, but I hold with the substance of it. It *would* be a curious thing if Charles died without children; it would be curiously lucky for some of us. I don’t know whatever he will do now, until his father’s death—he can’t go on as he is doing much longer, that is very certain.”

“ My firm belief is,” said Mr. Talbot, “ that if Hester had lived, she would very likely have done something for him, to spite the family. Perhaps it is better as it is.”

There was a general murmur of assent. Mr. Talbot was, from that remark, head of the family for at least ten minutes.

“ You are right, Cousin Talbot,” said Murdoch. “ Have you heard anything

as to what is going on in the law business lately?"

"It is a dead lock till Reginald's death, I understand," said Talbot. "I am going to spend no money; are you?"

"Not I; Reginald is good for twenty years, and the suit is good for fifty. I have given up thinking about the matter." And they all agreed that they never gave the thing a thought.

The conversation had become general and noisy; it principally ran on the approaching decease of Aunt Hester. Mrs. Simpson by degrees talked every one else down by superior lungs, and possibly an extra glass of sherry. She was nodding the Paradise bird in her bonnet, she was smoothing her green satin gown with one of her cream-coloured gloves, while she extended her other arm, from which drooped a black lace shawl, oratorically. She was going

away; her carriage had been rung for, and she stood up to conclude.

“Mark my words, my dear souls,” she said, with her back towards the door, in the midst of a strange silence, which she was too excited to notice. “Mark my words, I say—that man Goodge has designs upon Hester, and it will be well if we are not all left out in favour of that man. If ever I saw villainy, in a human face, I see it in the face of Goodge. You take my advice, you two gentlemen, the moment the breath is out of Hester’s *body*, dash off to Fitzroy Square, and put your seals on everything, and see after the machinations of that villain Goodge.”

She turned to go majestically, but brought up short with a loud scream. Goodge and Aunt Hester were standing before her, waiting until she had done. There was nothing for it but to roar

with laughter—the discomfiture of Mrs. Simpson, the most disagreeable of the whole kith and kin, was too absurd. It was exactly the joke for sardonic old Aunt Hester. Had Mrs. Simpson been less eager to hear her own voice she might have heard the servant announce the new comers, but Aunt Hester had heard quite enough to suit her grim humour.

Still Aunt Hester looked like anything but laughing. Her air was wild, her eyes were red with weeping, and there was an appearance of horror in her face. Goodge, too, the man of a thousand escapes, looked very anxious and uneasy. There was something about the pair which produced a terrified silence among those who had been so noisy just before. Aunt Hester spoke with a trembling voice.

“ My dear souls, *have* you seen Reginald ? ”

“No, no!” was the murmured answer from all quarters.

Aunt Hester began to weep again. “He has heard all about it, and has gone, God knows whither. I fear he will make away with himself. I am afraid he has done so already, for he went away with nothing but his hat, the moment he got the news.”

“News? what news?” said Mr. Talbot.

“About Charles, of course.”

“What about him?” asked Mr. Murdoch.

“Dead, dead, dead! drowned last night, coming across to see his wife. Alas, poor Charles! alas, poor Charles!”

And they all echoed in a frightened whisper—

“Dead!”

CHAPTER XV.

A POOR BUBBLE BURSTS.

A DAY or two after the descent on Aunt Hester, Reginald wrote to Charles to say that everything was going well, and that Aunt Hester had entirely taken to both the mother and son. But by the next post came a letter saying that the mother had been suddenly and violently seized with illness, and was in danger.

Poor Charles ! What could he do. He loved his wife tenderly, and the thought of never seeing her again overwhelmed him. To go to England was madness, and yet how could he stay ? He took his griefs to General Talbot.

“ My dear cousin,” said General Talbot, “ you ought to go certainly, but the risks are very great.”

“ Well, I will risk it all. I would sooner go to prison than suffer what I do. She may be dead now.”

“ But the packet does not sail till the day after to-morrow.”

“ I wonder how much a fishing-boat would charge to take me across ? ”

“ Make your bargain, cousin, and I will be your banker.”

“ When is there a tide ? ”

“ At seven o’clock.”

“ Then I will go to Pollet at once.”

The bargain was not long in making, for both parties were willing. A large fishing-boat with a crew of three men was hired, and they were to sail for Brighton on the top of the tide at seven.

General Talbot bid good-bye to him at the door of his house, and walked

along the quay to the end to see him off. He had not long walked up and down by the lighthouse, when he noticed that Charles would have a wet passage, for there were heavy clouds away towards Treport, to the east, from which the thunder growled ominously. Still there was but little wind, and that off shore.

At last the long-drawn row of toiling women in blue and red petticoats with white caps was seen approaching. They were towing the fishing-boat out, whose red sails were scarcely full.

When the women came to the end of the pier they ceased towing, and stood in a group, casting the tow-rope into the water. Then they began talking.

“ Ha! ” said one, “ it is the luck of Père Roney always. He gets a fine price for to-night’s work — five thousand francs, they say.”

“ But that is impossible.”

“ Truly, then, impossible, but true. He is paid beforehand also.”

“ I tell you,” said another, “ that the passenger is the Protestant clergyman whose wife is ill, and that Roncy gets two hundred and eighty francs.”

The truth was unpalatable ; women like wonders. The first speaker said—

“ It is either Charles X., I tell you, or one of his court. Why, we all know that the King left Paris four days ago, and at once we have a stranger flying from our port. He is a great man, this one. If my husband had had the chance he would have asked a thousand francs.”

“ And not got it,” said another. “ There is the man, standing by Père Roncy himself ; it is the Protestant English minister.”

The boat was underneath the General’s feet now, and he hailed Charles.

“ Good-bye ; be sure you will meet her in safety. Good-bye.”

Charles waved his hand, but said nothing audible, and the boat, catching the shore wind, sped away over the darkening waters, under the continuous blink of the approaching lightning. With a heavy heart the General turned away, with none but gentle thoughts for his eccentric and unfortunate kinsman.

The *Blonde* frigate, one of the swiftest of her class, was in the Channel, off Brighton, with orders to look out for any open boats or small craft making for the English shore. The astonishing events at Paris had only just reached London, and it was believed, in the highest quarters, that nothing short of a Red Republic would settle down on that unhappy city before the end of July. Some fugitives were, it was thought, very likely to make in open boats from Dieppe to Newhaven. The *Blonde*, having nothing to do, was ordered to look out for them.

The Captain of the *Blonde*, looking at his glass and at the weather, and considering also that he was on a lee shore, sent down his top-gallant-masts, and gave himself plenty of sea room. He was wise. He would have liked to pick up Charles X., as well as another, but it was going to blow, and he had six hundred of the King's men to think about.

The night of the 3rd of August, 1830, settled down with a most fearful thunder-storm from the south-east, followed by a gale of wind from the same quarter, so sudden and so terrible, that the *Blonde* put her pretty sides into it, and thrashed away to sea with every bit of canvas she could carry. Sudden and sharp as the wind was, it hardly blew long enough to lash up a sea, when it lulled for half-an-hour, and then came down again from west stronger than ever. The Captain of the *Blonde* had been in the China

seas, and had seen the same thing before ; but the cyclone was a little too quick for him, and he lost his foretop-mast. During the temporary confusion caused by this, they sighted a fishing-boat flying French colours, with one rag of a brown sail (her jib), lying too, and apparently making good weather of it. She was undocked, however, and something was evidently wrong with her, for she ceased riding over the seas in a very few minutes, and went down head foremost, a little to the windward of them, leaving only one man visible, floating on a spare spar in the ugly cross sea.

It was impossible to launch a boat just then, but the *Blonde* would do anything but talk, and her head was put towards the Frenchman, who was now being borne rapidly towards them, clinging to a spar.

“ It is an old man,” said Tom Robert-

son, captain of the foretop. " You will let me go, sir, won't you ? " and the Captain of the *Blonde* said, " Yes."

Robertson, with a rope under his arm-pits, pitched himself into the sea just in front of the old man, who was driving upon them. The spar struck him heavily in the chest, but he held on, and brought his man alongside. When they got him on deck they found that he was very old, and that he could not talk English. It was Père Roncy.

" You have had a narrow escape, my man," said the Captain in French.

" The devil drives when one has a handsome offer and a rotten boat well insured. Hein ! I am sorry for the young men, and I am sorry for my passenger."

" Who was your passenger ? was he escaping from Paris ? "

" No. Had he been a Parisian he

would have had the peculiar protection of the patron saint of Paris—the devil. As it was, he was merely a heretic, a sort of Christian, to whom the devil himself gives no protection. They say you should not sail with heretics, but this one has brought me good luck. I net a thousand francs by this. I never could have insured my boat for another voyage, so thanks to the ever Blessed Virgin. I will walk barefoot through the streets to her shrine for this."

"For your preservation?"

"No; for my new boat and my thousand francs in pocket. A man must die, and I am safe; heaven owes me much."

"You infernal, ungrateful old scoundrel! who was your passenger?"

"The English Protestant minister at Arcis."

"Charles Hetherege?"

“Yes.”

“Go and get yourself dried, you old rascal,” said the Captain. “I knew that man somewhat,” he said to his first lieutenant. “A great many people will be sorry for his loss. Goodge told me that he was the most splendid preacher alive. We must bear up for Portsmouth, and I will send an enclosure to Goodge to be forwarded, for I think he is in town.”

The ship reached Portsmouth in ten hours. The letter to the Admiralty, detailing the reasons of the *Blonde's* coming into Portsmouth, reached White-hall in nine hours. The Secretary to the Admiralty was at his post, and he knew Reginald very well. Without forwarding the enclosed letter to Goodge, he wrote round to Reginald at his office, which was close by, and gently told him the whole truth as told him by the Captain of the *Blonde*.

Reginald read the letter, and then looked at the messenger. He was deadly pale, but he rose and got his hat and coat, and walking steadily, went round to the Admiralty, where he was at once admitted.

“Mr. Secretary,” he said in a calm voice, “do you believe this?”

“My dear Mr. Hetheredge, there is not the remotest doubt about the matter. Your son is drowned, sir. Pray do not build up idle hopes about his safety. God knows how I feel for you, and how every one feels for you: but I must say that, from Captain Arkwright’s letter, there is no doubt at all. I could tell you a piece of good news, sir, if any news could be of value to you now; I heard your chief speak of it to-day.”

“What is that?”

“In consequence of your long and honourable services, your one mistake

has been overlooked. You are not only reinstated in your original income, but you are raised one grade, and are considered as entitled to a pension, when the ordinary time of your service expires."

"Yesterday I should have been glad," said Reginald, "but to-day this ridiculous report has unnerved me. I am away to seek my son; if it is true, there is room enough in the sea for both of us."

It was his not believing in the disaster at first which saved him from suicide or madness. He went away to the seaside, not believing that it was true. But it was true enough. Charles was drowned on the very eve of a new lease of prosperity. Reginald's last wild words being reported to Goodge by the Secretary, made him fear that the father would throw himself into the arms of his drowned son.

For two or three days there was an awful suspense in the family, for nothing at all was heard of him. The great case of the will was brought up again, after lying dormant so long; they talked of nothing else. If Reginald was dead, there would be a settlement; and the heads of the family began to hint to one another about a compromise. It was a terrible time for all of them. But at the end of a week he returned to Hester quietly, telling her that he had been seeking for some tidings about Charles's remains, and that he had satisfied himself that it was nearly impossible that the sea would give up her dead.

At Hester's solicitation he took up his abode at her house, and his temporary residence with her soon was recognized as permanent. Few ever knew how near poor Reginald, in the

first burst of his despair, had been to a suicide, which the family thought would have solved much, and made most of them rich. Reginald never knew the deep curses which came from one throat, at all events, when he reappeared.

CHAPTER XVI.

MENDING MATTERS.

For a long time the life of the poor widow trembled in the balance. For five long years she had stood faithfully beside Charles, through poverty and evil report, and now she only heard the news of better days with a dull, aching sorrow—he had been taken from her just as he would have been enabled to take his place in the world, wiser through misfortune, and with an increased motive for exertion should the child live. To her poor affectionate little heart every pleasure now became as pain, because

he could not share it. The very beauties of her child were a disappointment to her, for they were admired alone.

It was determined silently by Aunt Hester, that she was never to be separated from her. Aunt Hester discovered that she had lived too long alone, and determined to have a little more company about her, in the shape of a brooding woman, and a melancholy stricken, middle-aged man. The care of these two did her great good, and very much softened her heart towards her relations, —even the implacable Mrs. Simpson. There is no doubt that had Charles lived she would have set him right in the world for his wife's sake, and have given him another chance ; but it was too late —affairs were to take another course. It was pretty evident now which way Aunt Hester's money would go. It was a bad job, but it could not be helped,

so there was no use thinking any more about it.

As Hester evidently, in remorse for her wicked conduct in shielding Reginald and Mary, and openly speaking of her testamentary designs on the baby, was more pleased than before to receive the visits of her relations, why, the relations had no objection to pay those visits. They were not only accepted, but returned. In a very short time Hester was received on familiar and affectionate terms by the family generally, as one who had been for a time estranged through a misconception which had now been cleared away.

Reginald also was in a very different position with his amiable connections. He was a well-to-do man now, and apparently a great favourite with the kind Minister, who had reinstated him: he had done yeoman's service, and had his

reward. They treated him with great respect, and Reginald, though his hair got rather quickly white, was a very handsome and agreeable man, who might marry any day; and should he show any tendency that way, he would find very little difficulty in being accommodated in the family. But Reginald had no such intention; he was quite settled on far other matters.

Aunt Hester was found to be a most valuable person in the family conclave, as she was the only person who could manage the fat and furious Mrs. Simpson. Miss Laura Talbot always gave battle to that estimable woman; but, though they might both scold themselves red, there was never any decided victory on either side. Aunt Hester showed herself mistress, from the very first—after what may be called the reconciliation—by letting Mrs. Simpson

scold herself hoarse, while she, on the other hand, sat perfectly dumb, looking at her. When Mrs. Simpson was morally and physically exhausted, and everybody thought that it was all over, *then* Aunt Hester began such a withering onslaught on to the fat woman, that she was reduced to tears and a glass of sherry in five minutes.

Poor Mary was voted a very gentle and biddable person, with whom no fault could be found. The story went that Charles had married her for her wit; she showed none now—she seemed a peculiarly colourless person.

The child grew and thrrove amazingly. A child of many prayers and many anxieties, it was called George, after young Barnett and Mr. Goodge, the latter of whom was soon to be away again on one of his expeditions. Aunt Hester and Reginald had many a long talk as to the

future ; one thing was always determined on, that George Hetherege's education was to be diametrically opposite to that of his father.

Goodge demurred ; he always did. " You should wait and see what the child promises to be before you decide. If he exhibits the same qualities as his father, educate him differently ; but if he seems different, why trouble ? His father had a very good education, but did not make a good use of it ; some do, and some don't. Give the boy a faith of some kind, however, and don't leave him as his father was left."

And so time went on. There were many marriages and many funerals, among the numerous family, who were, between the weddings, generally in a chronic state of black for some relation or another. There were some great events, as when the Talbots moved to

Highgate into a grander house, and when Mr. Murdoch's housemaid was murdered by the butler, who was hanged; on which occasion Aunt Hester made all her servants go to the execution, in order to show them the probable end of *their* careers. But in general they talked about little but dressing, eating, and going out to parties, principally among themselves and their own business connections. Something was occasionally heard about the Chancery suit, but no one cared much about it. When the suit had been started fifty years before, there had been some interest in it. Two members of the family only were never mentioned, James Murdoch and George Simpson, though they were occasionally heard of—the first by Aunt Hester, the second by his mother. Goodge, after each return from his expeditions,

used to ask if either of them were authentically hung, and on being told no, used to express the most profound disgust and disappointment.

With these few exceptions, there was nothing but peace within their walls, and prosperity within their palaces, while at the same time none of them got any younger. Meanwhile, a theory was erected by the family, which grew into a deep and settled belief. The theory and the belief alike were that they were the most profoundly respectable and prosperous family in England, and that, as there had never been any scandal in it in the past, so there would never be any in the future. James Murdoch and George Simpson were both alive, certainly; but in spite of those facts, the family passed into such a state of complacent infallibility, that Aunt Hester and Reginald began to

believe in it. The attitude of the family was the attitude which the Papacy assumes at certain times, that of being beyond human accidents. We shall show how this illusion came to be dissipated.

Reginald grew more and more quietly famous in what was now the speciality of his life, theoretical finance ; as a writer, he had few equals in this line, and his undoubted talents were such as to meet with solid recognition in his department. Mr. Murdoch, and other merchants not of the family, spoke of him as one of the longest-headed men of the day, as he certainly was theoretically. Murdoch actually offered him means to reduce his theories to practice. But Reginald at that time said no ; that he preferred to study finance in the abstract, without any of the anxieties of the concrete, which might disturb

his judgment. A man who will decline a loan of ten thousand pounds for such excellent reasons was, undoubtedly, the first financier of his age.

CHAPTER XVII.

FOOTFALLS.

ABSOLUTE silence in London proper is now almost impossible; even in a place where there is no thoroughfare, a few footsteps are sure to break the stillness of the night, at uncertain times, and cheer the sick wakers with a sense of companionship. In a place like Bolton Row, with the narrow alley behind the Duke of Devonshire's gardens, into Berkeley Square, open to pedestrians at all times of the night, silence is never secured at all; footsteps come and go until morning, with intervals long enough to enable the waking listener to give a

character to each one in his imagination. He hears them coming in the distance, he says; now he is by that lamp, now he is by another; now he is passing, now he is between the walls, now he is in the square, for he is singing, and by the sound of his voice he is past the alley. It is easier to sleep in the noisiest thoroughfare in London, where even the confused roar of the traffic becomes no more to you than the rhythmical breaking of the waves upon the shore, than it is to sleep in the end of Bolton Row, nearest to the Duke of Devonshire's garden, where each footstep becomes individualized.

Gentlemen who have been in the late bombardments have said that, after the first, silence awoke them more than the roar of the cannon kept them from sleep. The reason of this is obvious: the bombardment had become the normal

state of things, and silence was a startling incident, not without hope of escape. So at some time in the world's history, the cessation of footfalls in Bolton Row became events, because two who lay in bed together would say to one another, "He may come to-night; the next foot-step may be his."

Watching, at intervals, for many years, for the sound of one footfall among the many thousand which passed at night, is a habit which begets morbid dreams and fancies. With our two watchers, these fancies grew on them more and more strongly as many years passed on, and their wish was only gratified every two or three years. They were a childless husband and wife, and they had peopled the house with ghosts before many years were over their heads. They had, after about ten years, filled the house with so many, and had seen them

too, that they did not care for them. They were latterly much more fearful of robbers than of ghosts, and so they suborned a strong young man, of unimpeachable principles, to take care of them with a blunderbuss. This young man, who grew tolerably old in the service, was born on the second Friday in Leap Year, and consequently had not the power given to ordinary mortals of seeing ghosts and spectres. He being supposed to be an honest young man always declared that he never saw any ghosts in the house at all, a fact which he attributed, most modestly, to the unfortunate day of his birth, adding that he was not to be blamed for it.

Consequently our couple never used to arouse the man in the mere case of a ghost, though as years went on they saw more and more. At last the husband, having seen a ghost in broad daylight

without the wife's assistance, Mrs. Dicker insisted that he should see no ghosts unless they were seen by her, and received the stamp of authenticity from her hand. "It was bad enough," she said, "at night."

It would have been very disagreeable at night had they disturbed any one but themselves, but they never did ; they lived in an atmosphere of complacent horror. There was a closed room in the house, at the back of the first floor, which contained the ghosts. Iron shutters had been put outside the windows when they first took possession, and they had caused the door to be closed with lath and plaster and papered the same as the walls. Whenever the paper was renewed, the new paper was put over the old, so that the inhabitants of the room never had any idea of the fact that there was a room beyond. Yet this was the room where the ghosts lived.

In 1784 young Mr. Pitt, finding a deficit of three millions, boldly reduced the tax on tea, from fifty per cent. to twelve and a-half per cent., so as to stop smuggling. It was a great success in the end, but for the time doubtful, and so he laid on other taxes with a view to avoid mistakes; amongst other things he increased the window tax, and bade the collectors see that it was properly collected. Nay, if a Chelsea legend be true, he was riding down the King's Road, Chelsea, to meet the King, when he saw them building a bay window with three mullioned divisions. He at once determined that three windows should be charged for in such cases, and not one. The tax was more carefully collected. A certain sharp tax collector of St. George's, Hanover Square, noticed that there was a blocked window at the back of No. 1, Bolton Row, which was not paid for.

He entered the house to verify it, but to his horror he found that there was *one more window outside the house than inside*. The Dickers had to admit him to their confidence, and paid for the window. The collector asked, as a matter of curiosity, to see the room out of which the shut room opened, which the ghosts haunted. It was impossible to see the place where the door was. He never let the story out in its truth, for he knew the Dickers as acquaintances and regular payers, but he let out quite enough to frighten the watchman, and possibly the watchman (and the young man with the blunderbuss) frightened the thieves. No. 1, Bolton Row, got rather an ill name in the neighbourhood.

But not out of it. For many years—a few, indeed, before the footfall came at night for the first time—the house was well known, among a certain connection,

as a fashionable lodging-house during the season. Possibly the first recommendations to it may have come from the “family” of which we have been lately reading, but from which we are at present dissociated. At all events, the Dickers and their house got a reputation for comfort, good cookery, and first-rate attendance, and were seldom without customers —getting large prices among the most *recherché* people during the season, and respectable prices off and on during the rest of the year. Possibly the guests were all born the second Friday in Leap Year, for none of them ever saw any ghosts ; and as for the resolute young man, he was dressed in livery, and waited at table without the blunderbuss.

It was the ground and first floors that were let ; the third floor, which was more handsomely furnished even than the other two, was kept sacred, amply swept

and garnished expectant of the footfall, though it might be far away, dragging wearily through the fever marshes of Holland, brushing through the vines of Spain, or awakening the echoes of American forests. All the house was furnished in a singularly luxurious manner, but the precious treasures were all collected on the third story. Sometimes a very favoured lodger would be allowed to see the rooms, which were always kept ready,—there were few more sumptuous suites of rooms in London.

“I clean them with my own hand,” Mrs. Dicker would say. “My boy may come at any time, and he always comes at night, and on foot—that is an old fancy of ours. If he is killed, we shall hear the footfall just the same, for he will come to us in the spirit, if not in the flesh.”

The owner of the footstep had been

bred in the house, which was the only home he had ever known. Until 1783 the step was frequent enough about the house in every direction; but then it went away for a time, and then the intervals between it became more and more lengthy, and the house, to its permanent inhabitants, more and more dull. At last, in 1787, the brightest creature which the house contained went away into the world, followed by prayers and tears. From 1790 to 1793 his absence was continuous, and at last a wandering soldier came to them and told them that their boy was lying wounded at Dunkirk. Three months afterwards, in the night, a halting step was heard at the door, and in two minutes a handsome young officer was in their arms—a lieutenant now, highly mentioned by the Duke of York.

As years went on, the boy officer became a man—captain, major, and at

last colonel, covered with honour in every quarter of the world—always the hero of these two faithful old people, he kept to his bargain, half humorous, half melancholy, of coming back after a campaign at night on foot and alone.

Time dragged along with the old people; the roar of London invaded their locality, and rendered the passing footsteps a little more difficult to hear. The unimpeachable young man began to get mature in the service, but they still considered him a youth. The world had been fiercely ablaze ever since they had entered on the possession of that house, and wherever the fire had blazed fiercest their boy had been, not without glory, but very much the reverse. Wherever blows were going he, backed by both luck and interest, was to be found.

He found time to get married, and to make a splendid match; he married the

great East India heiress of the day, remembered by the dwellers in Bolton Row as a pale, feeble lady, who occupied the whole house for eight months, when she died there, leaving behind her the impression of a gentle, kindly woman, with nothing whatever remarkable about her except ninety thousand pounds and half a province worth of jewels, which were entirely her husband's property. The Colonel seemed to have found something more remarkable about her than her money, however, for he utterly refused to be comforted, and moped and brooded so about the house after her death, that they heard him tramping about the house, regardless of ghosts, at all hours in the night. He had never had time for love in his busy and continually active life. He had loved her with the passion of a man who falls in love for the first time at thirty-four, and

she was taken from him before he thought that he had realized his happiness. She may have had faults, which he might have discovered later: she died in the odour of love's sanctity, and remained a saint to him, though she was but a kind ordinary mortal to others.

A short pause took place in his life after her death; his service had been almost continual since he joined the army in 1787, until 1802. The antecedents of his wife were little known; very little more was known about her than that she was a great heiress, a little older than himself it was said, and that her name was Kitwell. Her father had been a friend of Clive and of Hastings, but had made most of his money under the Portuguese flag. No one remembered him very much, and in a few years no one thought of her; still people were surprised at the Colonel mourning so

much for such a rather second-class woman, whom he could not have seen very often before he married her, and who had left him worth half a million (in reality £100,000) of money.

He married at the peace of Amiens, and stayed with her until she died in November. Then he mourned for her five months, living at the house in Bolton Row, during which time his footsteps came and went every night. The peace lasted but little over the year; during that time he had seen what perfect happy married life was, and the old people said, “He will marry again.”

But he never did. The breach of the peace of Amiens started him again, and Bolton Row knew him only at long and uncertain intervals. Meanwhile, his wife was the last lodger ever seen there. After her decease and her husband’s departure, no other lodgers darkened the

doors except the permanent lodgers, the ghosts.

The old couple—for they were getting very old now—put the whole house in order for his return, but he very seldom came. The house was now his own; during the peace of Amiens the old couple had made it over to him with nearly all its contents by a deed of gift, and only remained tenants-at-will. He accepted the gift with a laugh, and also acquiesced gladly in the provisions of their will, which he witnessed, thereby proving that he was not interested in it. He then went away, only to return thrice before Waterloo; for in good truth, what had once been his happy home, now only represented the grave of his dearest hopes, and Bolton Row for many years was hateful to him. He came to see the place only three times between the peace of Amiens and the pause after Waterloo.

He never neglected his kind old friends. He would write to them from bloody fields after each victory (and there were little but victories then). He would say from Spain, at the end, "We caught them again yesterday; if we go on like this you will hear my footfall on the stones soon;" but the last they heard of them was when he came home on important business in 1812. He stayed three days with them then, and told them that he was General and C.B. Then he went away, and they found that he stayed at an hotel before he returned to Spain. "He has not forgotten her," they said; "he hates the house now, though he loves us as well as ever." Then he went back to Spain, to Wellington, and was in London no more until the great peace, though he wrote to them until the last, and after the last.

They wrote to him sometimes, but not

often. The last letter they wrote was signed by both of them, and gave the General singular anxiety, although it was just after the battle of Vittoria, an event which had given him great personal satisfaction. What that letter contained is of no great consequence at present, but he considered it important and disturbing in the highest measure.

A brother general asked him if he had had bad news from home.

“I have had the worst of all bad news. I have to decide on a point of duty, and I cannot decide.”

“Put me your case.”

“The wishes of a dead man on the one side, and the possibility of preventing a great injustice on the other.”

“H’m,” said General H——; “you are a sound Churchman?”

“Yes.”

“Well, neither the wishes nor even

the bequests of dead men have found much favour since the Reformation. Do you suppose that Wolsey meant Christ Church to be what it is now ? ”

“ Ay, ay ! ” said our General, “ that is all very well ; but at the same time, suppose the dead man’s wishes were those of the man to whom you owe everything in the world ? ”

“ Well, Arthur, the man to whom you owe everything in the world is yourself : no one knows that better than I do. *But*, if you put it that way, respect the dead man’s wishes, and let the injustice right itself.”

“ And either of us might fall to-morrow,” said our General.

In the glorious confusion of events which hurled themselves so thick on Europe during the three years between 1812 and 1815, and which are so *con-*

sistently vast, that the grand *bouleversement* of 1870-71 reads like a pantomime after a tragedy ; the General was never in England at all until the autumn of 1815. It was entirely his own fault—he might have been in England fifty times over, but he always preferred some mission on the Continent. He cared little for England, for he said that he had few friends there, and had forgotten insular manners. On the night of the 14th of November, 1815, he delivered despatches at the Horse Guards, and turned away up Parliament Street towards Bolton Bow.

“They will expect me,” he said to himself ; “they always wait for my foot-fall, and they must have got my letter from Paris. But it is cold, and London is hateful. Who could get men to fight such a night as this ? The devil ! If that arch rascal Napoleon, guided by his patron saint, could have come on London

in a fog like this, he might have sacked the bank."

It was a deadly night. The fog was so dense that the new gas, or, as he called them, gauze lights, could do nothing at all with it. His nearest way would have been across the Mall, but he preferred the streets. He had to ask the way of the watch twice before he could find Pall Mall.

He had a club there, one of the few there then, and he went into it and looked round. He had not been in the place for nearly four years. They had altered it, and there was a new porter, who asked his name. He gave it, and walking on into the coffee-room, sat down, and laid his sword on the table before him.

There was not a man in the room whom he knew. It was miserable—so many years away, and not a friend to

welcome him—and the cursed fog was in here, too. He rose, put on his sword again, and went to the fire.

A waiter, seeing a general officer in full war paint and orders (he had posted to the Horse Guards, it must be remembered) standing by the fire, went up to him humbly, and asked for his orders.

“I beg your pardon?” said the terrible-looking General very gently.

The waiter, alarmed at a gentleness very uncommon in those times, asked feebly if he wanted anything.

“Yes,” said the General, “I want sun. I also want forgetfulness of the past, and guidance for the future. How do you get these things in England, you people? *N’importe.*”

The scared waiter, knowing nothing but his trade, said,—

“Port, sir? Yes, sir.”

“He is right, this fellow,” said the

General ; “ the climate would make Rechab drink. That is exactly the way some of our people have been managing matters lately. I never tried it in my life ; I wonder what it is like ? I’ll try it, I want a little Dutch courage before I go out into the fog. But it strikes me that I am hungry ; I have eaten nothing since breakfast.”

The General soon found himself before a plate of beef, with a bottle of port wine beside him. In a short time he felt better, and more courageous. He rose, paid, gave half a guinea to the waiter for himself, and walked out with his sword under his arm.

“ Pitt used to drink four bottles a day of that stuff,” he remarked, as he walked along ; “ half a bottle is quite enough for me. I am perfectly courageous with regard to the fog now, but I doubt if my moral sense is any higher. Another

bottle, and I would do the deed to-night.' Shall I go back and have one? Why, no. Hang them all! let them be plagued with the whips which they make of their own avarice. No, my father, I will do your bidding—at least for the present."

The fog was denser and denser, and when he had mounted into Piccadilly, and was walking westward, he could not tell where the houses on the other side of the street ended; but at last he found the east wall of Devonshire House, and guided himself by it until he came to the alley.

What if anything should be amiss? He had not heard from them for some time. What if they were dead, and had left the house with the secret room unprotected? He paused, and in mere absence of mind mechanically took off his cocked hat and looked at the feathers, while he drummed with his foot.

Not a step moved in the Row, and the front of the house was dark. He passed it stealthily and watched, then he came towards it quickly, at his accustomed pace, and knocked loudly at the door.

For a short time there was no response, and the footsteps were heard approaching the door. His heart grew cold within—they were steps he knew, but not those of either of his old friends. A man's voice said,—

“Who is there?”

“It is I, Thomas, the General.”

The door was at once unfastened, and a man admitted him, once the young man of the blunderbuss.

“You are welcome, General. God knows I am glad to see you.”

“Is anything the matter?”

“They are both dead.”

“I will come in,” and he passed into the dining-room.

“ And when did this happen ? ”

“ Six months ago, General.”

“ And you ? ”

“ I have done as they ordered ; I have kept the house for you.”

“ Intact ? ”

“ Perfectly so, General.”

“ You have been a good servant, and you shall be rewarded. Have you been alone ? ”

“ No, General. The old people sent at last for Miss Mortimer. She came, of course, and has remained ever since. She has seen to all business matters.”

“ I am very much obliged to her and to you. Go and rouse her, and tell her I am here.”

“ I think it is unnecessary, General, I hear her coming down stairs.”

The door was at once opened, and a tall, pale lady draped in black entered the room, with a candle held close to her

face. She looked about forty, and her hair was looped up carelessly on each side of a calm, beautiful face, over which sorrow never seemed to have passed, if one only looked at it when it was animated, but which showed hard worn lines in repose. It was now animated. Isabel Mortimer advanced and kissed the General, who hastily returned her kiss.

“ Brother, dear, has Thomas told you that they are dead ? ”

“ Yes. Why, sister, you look young again ! ”

“ I knew your footstep, and I was ten years younger at once, Arthur. I have been waiting for your step a long while. Your clothes are ready in your room ; you have been so long away that they are old fashioned.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

“LIGHT some fire for your master, Thomas,” said Isabel, “and air the sheets which are ready laid for him in the wardrobe in his room. You know where to find them. Now, Arthur,” she added, sitting down, “you are come home to live with me at last.”

“No, Isabel, I shall not be at home for long. But now, my dear, a hundred thanks for coming to my house so promptly.”

“My dear, why should I not? I sold the school, and was for the first time in my life an idle woman. I could do no

less than come to them. They have urged me all their lives to come and live with them, but, as you know, I refused to eat the bread of idleness at their expense, and chose to provide for myself. I have worked on and made money, and they have left me all except the house and its contents. How much do you think ? ”

“ I can’t tell at all. In my father’s time they saved much ; I cannot guess by a thousand pounds. I know that I witnessed their will in your favour.”

“ They have left me eighteen thousand pounds. Dicker had, from intercourse with our father, some of his knowledge of speculation, and his speculations turned out well. This eighteen thousand pounds will be a vast sight more some day. In short, I am a rich woman.”

“ They were a strange couple,” said the General, thoughtfully.

“ Yes, they were very strange. How

strange it was that they should have loved us both so truly!"

"Eighteen thousand pounds, Isabel!" said the General, still in amazement. "Why, they were letting lodgings when they could have hired them."

"It is true. They gave themselves few pleasures in this world, and one of them was amassing money; another was being generous with it to two people who had less than no claims on them. The solution is very simple: they had no children, and they loved you and myself. They gave me such a splendid education that I utilized it for the sake of independence, believing them to be poor. This they disapproved of until I succeeded, and after that I was nearly as much a goddess to them as you were a god. Your footstep was more precious to them than mine ever was. *You know that.*"

“ It is time you should rest, old sister.”

“ I *have* had a wearisome life, Arthur, and I want rest. I have worked so many years, that the past is only a dream of faces which I shall never see again as they once were. I am not old, yet I seem to have lived a hundred lives. Arthur ! ”

“ Yes, old sister.”

“ How many comrades and friends have you lost in these wars ? ”

“ Ah, Isabel ! how many ? Nearly every one of them, so help me God ! ”

“ Dead ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And young ? ”

“ Yes ; for I always took to the young, even in preference to those of my own age. It was a peculiarity.”

“ And you have seen many of the young comrades you have loved lying dead on an honourable field ? ”

“Ay, Isabel, I have helped to drag many fine young fellows whom I loved into the trenches before now.”

“Thank God for it, Arthur; it is better so. Have you never thought so yourself? See, I will put it in another way: have you never seen a young man join your regiment who has not been killed, but has lived on, and have you never said, ‘It would have been better that he should have fallen while some nobility was left in him, than have lived on to be what he is now?’”

“Yes, I have often envied the dead,” said the General; “and some are alive now who had much better be lying under the Spanish vines. Well, sister?”

“It is the same in our profession, brother. I have sent girls into the world as I thought formed, but the world has spoilt them, and they have come to see me vain, frivolous, worldly, silly, extravagant,

having forgotten even the mere mechanical teaching which I gave them. Two, whom I believed angels, have dragged their names down to degradation, and have ruined families. I say to you, as I would say before God, that I have striven to do my duty by every girl who has been put under my charge. When they first came to me I studied their characters; where I found wrong instincts I combatted them, where I found good ones I encouraged them. I made the mistake of trying to form God's creatures, in which He has put such infinite diversity of disposition, into Mrs. Hannah More's and Mrs. Chapone's models. I have made ten failures for one success. In spite of all I can do, the woman, shortly after she has left me, becomes very much the same as the girl was when she came to me, only her faults seem rather intensified. My forming is only varnishing,

brother, after all, and the world soon rubs that off, and the real wood most inexorably appears underneath it. I don't know anything about boys, I consider them a mistake on the part of Providence. You may be able to form a boy after he is ten, but you can't form a girl—at least, *I can't with my system.*"

"Yet you have had great successes, sister. Your name ranks high."

"Yes, with girls who were made too good for me to spoil. My girls are perfect gentlewomen; no fault can ever be found with their manners, and they know a great deal; yet two of them have turned Roman Catholic, and two—never mind—they are not received. In short, I have toiled hard, and have made a failure. I will toil no more, at present. Do you know why I have failed?"

"Because you believed that every girl and woman was as good as yourself."

“Nonsense! I have failed because my profession was to train girls for the world. What do I know of the world? why, absolutely nothing. I ask you how could I? I was only a nameless, penniless child, from some whim of our strange father’s utterly unprovided for—but for those dear folks lately dead I might have gone to the workhouse. Well, no more of that—it was long before I knew that you were my half-brother. I had no means of knowing the world. As a governess, what could I hear; and when, through my own exertions, I made a connection, what could I learn? In that set the very book of the world is closed. I sent my girls into the world utterly innocent, to sink or swim. Most of them have swum, thanks more to themselves than to me. I am tired of the whole thing, in short, and I am going to see the world for myself.”

“ You ; can’t do that, my Isabel ; you can’t know about men.”

“ I don’t want to ; I want to know about women. If I want to know about men, I can always get the truth from you.”

“ Yes ; and you propose—— ? ”

“ That you should let me have this house, and I will start as a fine lady. I am not old, I am not ill-looking, I have money, I have a connection, I know as much of society as will keep me in talk —there is nothing to prevent my seeing this world into which I have sent so many girls.”

“ As for the house,” said the General, “ why, it is yours as long as you choose. No one knows who you are.”

“ Oh no ; the secret has been well kept. I am not sure that I know the whole truth myself.”

“ Take the house, my dear, by all

means, and ask me to your parties; you will end by keeping a school for dowagers. But, Isabel, come upstairs with me. Do you know the secret of the house?"

She looked so puzzled that it was evident she did not.

"I see you do not," he said, when they were on the third floor. "But here, beyond this room there is a third. If you have this room re-papered, keep the old paper up."

"Another room?"

"Yes. Did the old folks say nothing to you about it?"

"Not a word."

"Did they ever mention anything?"

"Never one word."

"It is, perhaps, as well," he said. "The secret of Vittoria shall be kept. I say, Isabel, have you seen anything of the great family lately?"

“I see some of them, sometimes—Miss Simpson oftenest. I have made a very queer discovery.”

“What is that?”

“That not one of the living members of that family have the remotest idea who you are.”

“That is extremely amusing,” said the General. “Now bed, my dear, and to-morrow an inventory of the furniture. They don’t know who I am, that is very good. Pray do not tell them.”

END OF VOL. I.

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